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ABSTRACT

Intended for English teachers and administrators involved in curriculum design, this monograph describes the Language Learning Project, an investigation into current school practices in the teaching of English language in the Australian junior secondary school, with particular reference to teaching directed toward the attainment of language competence. Following an introduction to the project, the report is presented in two parts. The first part uses the data from the case study schools to provide an overview of current curriculum practices in the teaching of English language in the junior secondary school. The second part examines the applicability of the concept of curriculum style to English language instruction, and develops a typology of curriculum style based on current practices in the case study schools. The teacher and student instruments used in the study are appended. (HTH)

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ACER RESEARCH MONOGRAPH NO. 19

CURRICULUM STYLE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE

An Investigation into Current Practices in the Teaching of English Language in Australian Schools

Kevin Piper

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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English giveth us great occasion to the right use of matter and manner, being indeed capable of any excellent exercising of it. I know some will say that it is a mingled language. And why not so much the better, taking the best of both the other? Another will say it wanteth Grammar. Nay, truly it hath that praise, that it wanteth not Grammar, for Grammar it might have, but it needs not; being so easy of itself and so void of those cumbersome differences of Cases, Genders, Moods, and Tenses, which I think was a piece of the Tower of Babylon's curse, that a man should be put to school to learn his mother tongue.

- Sir Philip Sidney: Apologie for Poetrie (1595)

INTRODUCTION

At the core of the debate on the school curriculum lies a poverty of information. While it is relatively easy to get advice on what schools should be doing, it is a good deal harder to get reliable information on what they are doing, and harder still to place that information in the context of curriculum change. There was a time when the school curriculum was largely defined, at least in its planned form, by detailed syllabuses, centrally prescribed and centrally monitored; and, while creative teachers frequently managed to introduce innovative elements, by and large the school curriculum was readily accessible and readily understood.

But those conditions no longer operate. The increasing devolution of responsibility for the curriculum to the schools themselves, coupled with the tendency for syllabus statements, where they still exist, to take the form of general guidelines or frameworks capable of, and often encouraging, a variety of interpretations, has created a climate where change is not only possible but inevitable; and while change has almost certainly been less dramatic than the popular imagination would have it, there is a good deal more diversity in the curriculum both within and between schools than was common in the past. If we are to understand this diversity and the nature of the changes that have taken place, there is a need for research which undertakes the task of documenting and analysing the school curriculum not as it appears in the syllabus guidelines and the subject association journals but as it occurs in practice in the schools.

The Origins of the Study

The research project reported here had its origins in an earlier study, *Curriculum Style and Social Learning* (Piper, 1979) which set out to provide just such a mapping of the curriculum in social education.[1] The study was carried out by means of case studies of 20 Victorian and New South Wales schools, selected with a view to providing as wide a range of approaches to the curriculum in social education as possible.[2] As a result of that study it was possible to develop a typology of curriculum style based on the actual practice of the case study schools.[3] Not surprisingly, questions were raised about the usefulness of the typology as an analytical and classificatory device in areas of the curriculum other than social education. Was it peculiar to social education, or did it have a more general application to the wider curriculum? And, if so, what sorts of modifications would be necessary to make it more widely applicable?

At the same time the standards debate had produced considerable community and educational interest in the teaching of English language in the schools. While much of the debate was ill-informed, and some of it scurrilous, it did stem in the main from a genuine concern, and a recognition of the central importance of language education in

living and learning, and this in turn led to a growing interest in core curriculum. Of the many conceptions of core curriculum advanced in the current debate, perhaps the most readily justifiable is a functional conception of the core as that learning which will give students a measure of control over their own lives and their own life-choices and enable them to function effectively as citizens in a modern democratic society. Central to such a conception of the core curriculum is language, and in particular the notion of language competence.

The Language Learning Project

It was in the context of these ongoing concerns that the Language Learning Project was conceived. The project was concerned with an investigation into current school practices in the teaching of English language in the junior secondary school, with particular reference to teaching directed towards the attainment of language competence. The aims of the study were:

1 to map the range of approaches to the teaching of English language in Australian junior secondary schools;

2 to determine the relevance of the concept of curriculum style to the English language curriculum, and to determine what modifications, if any, would be required to develop a typology of curriculum style suited to the English language area; and

3 to explore the variety of viewpoints amongst English language teachers as to what constitutes language competence.

The study was carried out by means of case studies of 25 schools in New South Wales, Victoria, and the Australian Capital Territory.[1] Both quantitative and qualitative techniques were employed in gathering data for the study, and an attempt was made to bring together three different perspectives - those of the teacher, the student, and the outside observer (the researcher) - on three different aspects of the curriculum in English language: the *ideal curriculum*, or what ought to be taught; the *planned curriculum*, or what it is intended to teach; and the *operative curriculum*, or what is actually perceived to be taught in practice. The study is essentially concerned with the educational process, with what goes on in schools, rather than with the more traditional emphasis on outcomes. It does not seek to be evaluative in nature, but rather to identify and analyse the variety of approaches to the teaching of English language currently employed in Australian junior secondary classrooms, and to explore their consequences for the kind of language education that students receive.

The Case Study Schools

The case study schools were selected with a view to providing as wide a range of approaches to the curriculum in English language as possible. Clearly a simple random sample of schools was unlikely to provide the desired range of approaches, and use was made of the experience gained in the earlier Social Learning Project in selecting an appropriate case study sample.[3] A number of schools from the earlier study was included in the sample on the basis of data already collected on general curriculum aims and school philosophy, and these were augmented by schools identified through consultation with people with an intimate knowledge of schools in New South Wales, Victoria, and the Australian Capital Territory, specifically people involved in English language curriculum development, teacher educators, and curriculum consultants. While the primary criterion for selection was the creation of a sample of schools covering the desired wide range of approaches to the curriculum in English language, care was taken to ensure that the sample included both state and independent schools; high schools and technical schools; inner urban, suburban, and rural schools; and boys', girls', and co-educational schools. Only good or at least competent examples of curriculum approaches were sought, since it was argued that any comparison of styles emanating from the study would be vitiated if it included poor or incompetent examples.

Initially 25 schools were selected for case study, 10 in New South Wales, 10 in Victoria, and 5 in the Australian Capital Territory. Exploratory case studies of the curriculum in English language in these 25 schools were conducted during 1980. Documentary evidence on English language programs was collected, interviews were conducted with the principal and with members of staff involved in the planning and teaching of English language programs in the junior secondary school, and an interim report on the study was prepared at the end of that year.

On the basis of the data collected in the exploratory case studies, eight schools were selected for more detailed follow-up case study in 1981, the criterion for selection being that the eight schools provided a representative cross-section of the approaches encountered in the wider sample of schools. While much of the data presented in this report - particularly the measurement data - was obtained from these eight focused case study schools, it is discussed in the context of the data collected from the wider sample of 25 schools. Thus, while there is no claim that the data reported here represent a random cross-section of current practice, we can have some confidence that the picture of current practice emerging from the data is a reasonably comprehensive one.

The Instruments Used in the Study

A variety of techniques was employed in gathering data on the schools' policies, programs, and practices in English language teaching, including classroom observation,

the content analysis of curriculum documents, flexibly structured interviews with teachers and students, and measurement instruments designed to provide comparative data on curriculum emphases.

The instruments devised for the measurement of teacher and student perceptions consisted of a questionnaire for teachers, and a set of Q-sort cards for students. Each instrument contained 19 items, arranged in four broad curriculum categories: writing, mechanics, reading, and talking and listening. The items on each instrument were parallel, but to facilitate communication across a range of ability levels the language of the Q-sort cards was simplified and examples were provided to illustrate each item. The items were selected on the basis of the analysis of data from the exploratory case studies, and were designed to provide a broad overview of the relative emphases placed on different facets of English language learning in the schools' programs, and to explore the relationship between these relative emphases and curriculum style.

The writing category contained five items designed to tap perceptions of the relative emphasis placed on narrative writing, report writing, formal essay writing, personal writing, and editing in the school curriculum in English language. The mechanics category contained three items designed to obtain information on the perceived emphasis given to grammar, spelling, and composition exercises in the English language program. The emphases of the reading program were covered by five items: intensive reading (that is, the detailed study of set books), extensive reading (that is, the reading of a wide range of books), interest-based reading, remedial reading, and reading comprehension. The perceived emphasis on oral language in the school program in English language was assessed by six items: small group discussion, drama and role-play, public speaking, interviewing, listening comprehension, and language variety, that is the study of aspects of language variation such as accent, dialect, and register.

Teachers were asked to rate each item on a three-point scale according to the emphasis it received in their program, as follows:

1 a lot of emphasis;

2 some emphasis;

3 little or no emphasis.

Provision was made for each item to be rated three times, once to represent the ideal program, once to represent the program as planned, and once to represent the program in practice.

Students were asked to arrange the Q-sort cards into three piles designated 'a lot of emphasis', 'some emphasis', and 'little or no emphasis'. Two sets of Q-sort cards, each of a different colour, were arranged by each student: one to represent his/her perception of the ideal curriculum in English language, and one to represent his/her perception of the school's operative curriculum in English language. Students were not

asked to make ratings of the planned curriculum, since it was assumed that in most schools they would have little involvement in or knowledge of program planning. The completed sets of arranged cards were collected and recorded later by the researcher.

The teacher questionnaire is reproduced in full in Appendix I, and the student Q-sort cards in Appendix II.

The Structure of the Report

The report is presented in two parts. Part One uses the data from the case study schools to provide an overview of current curriculum practices in the teaching of English language in the junior secondary school. Part Two examines the applicability of the concept of curriculum style to the English language area of the curriculum, and develops a typology of curriculum style based on current practice in the case study schools. In reporting the study I have been conscious of the varied audience to whom its findings are likely to be of interest: teachers, curriculum developers, administrators, and interested laymen no less than fellow curriculum researchers. Technical detail has consequently been kept to a minimum consistent with the integrity of the study, and where it has been found necessary to include it in order to sustain the argument, every effort has been made to demystify it and make it accessible to the general reader. In doing so I hope I have not given the impression of talking down to those of my colleagues for whom such explanation is superfluous.

Before concluding this brief introduction to the study I would like to record my indebtedness to the principals, staff, and students of those schools who have accorded me the privilege of sharing their problems and their solutions, their successes and their failures, their initiatives and their concerns; for without their tolerance, their co-operation, and their frankness this study could not have been realized, and this report could not have been written.

PART ONE

THE CURRICULUM IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE: AN OVERVIEW OF CURRENT PRACTICE

The curriculum is in the eye of the beholder. And so there are many curricula perceived simultaneously by different individuals and groups. The task of the researcher is to choose his perspective and then, initially, to describe what he sees. Disparities in perception are part of the data in seeking to understand the curriculum, not as a puerile thing of carefully construed ends and means, but as a significant ongoing entity in the lives of all involved in it.

- John I. Goodlad

CHAPTER 1

OF SNAKES, HOGS, AND WEAR AND TEAR: THE BACKGROUND TO PRACTICE

That the English language area of the curriculum is an area of uncertainty and confusion is not a unique observation. The relationship of language to 'subject English', both within the discipline and 'across the curriculum'; the rapid advance of linguistic theory, with implications for practice which are manifest but ill-defined; a bewildering succession of new ideas, frequently in competition and jostling with each other for the teacher's attention; the general lack of training in any form of systematic language study of most English teachers; the often strident demands of employers, parents, and the media, more often than not stubbornly at variance with the pronouncements of the pundits: all these and more have been variously noted and lamented, not least by English teachers themselves. But it is an observation that must be restated at the outset of any overview of current practice in the teaching of English language in Australian schools, since it sets the scene for that practice and provides an insistent underlying theme in any attempt to understand it.

The problem is not a new one. Even in the heyday of the 'structure of knowledge' approach to the organization of the school curriculum, 'subject English' was always something of a headache.

> It is characteristic of English that it does not hold together as a body of knowledge which can be identified, quantified, then transmitted. (Bullock, 1975:5)
>
> I doubt that an overall structure in the discipline called English can be satisfactorily demonstrated. It remains, as someone has said of history, 'a sack of snakes'. (Wilson, 1964:86)

Nor is it a purely Australian one. A recent survey of developments in English language teaching in the United Kingdom since 1965 expressed the view that:

> . . . it is the nature of English teaching at the present time to be a mixture of incompletely resolved influences, a collection of part-hogs, never the whole hog. (Allen, 1980:74)

A senior teacher in an Australian high school summed up the dilemma in these terms:

> More important contributing factors are the uncertainty engendered by the atmosphere of constant and rapid change . . . in which we now work as English teachers, and the stress of being an English teacher at a time when rational methods and practically everything we do is being challenged (by ourselves as well as the academics and the community at large). We are less able than ever to be sure of the value of what we are doing. There is much more wear and tear on teachers than there has been in the past, and I firmly believe that because of the nature of English there is more wear and tear on English teachers than others. (quoted in Maling-Keepes and Keepes, 1979:79)

and similar statements are echoed consistently in the taped interviews with teachers in the case study schools in the present study. It is the purpose of this chapter to identify some of the conflicting influences and pressures underlying this state of uncertainty and confusion, both as an introduction to the study of current school practice in English language teaching which follows, and as a necessary background to the understanding of that practice.

The Background to Change: A Potted History

During the 1950s English language teaching was something of a poor relation in the secondary school curriculum. Apart from periodic 'across the curriculum' onslaughts on spelling, it was seen to be almost exclusively the province of the English teacher, and subject English itself tended to be dominated by literature, perhaps because that was what most secondary English teachers saw to be the proper function of subject English in the secondary school curriculum, perhaps because that, in most cases, was what they were trained in. A period of grammar - sometimes called Formal English in deference to a growing concern with 'usage' - and a period of composition took their place beside four or five periods devoted to the study of poetry, Shakespeare, the novel, and essays/short stories in the weekly timetable that defined 'subject English'; and while the role of literature in language learning was not entirely disregarded, it is fair to say that the primary emphasis was on cultural transmission and the canons of literary criticism.

There were of course periodic expressions of public concern about literacy, and the perennial cries of 'declining standards' were abroad in the land - it was, as I recall it, a professor of chemistry at the University of Sydney who was making the running in the letters-to-the-editor columns of the *Sydney Morning Herald* in those days - but by and large secondary English teachers saw basic literacy as the responsibility of the primary school, and conveniently avoided the problem.

In the early 1960s books by David Holbrook and others stimulated a concern with 'creative writing' which, in some classrooms at least, transformed the composition period. At the same time the demand for 'relevance', stemming in particular from the writings of Jerome Bruner (1960; 1974), found expression in the English curriculum in the selection for study of literature which was not only more contemporary, but more attuned to the interests of the students.

The most important event of the 'sixties, however - at least in terms of the influence it was to have on English language educators - was the Anglo-American Conference on the Teaching of English held at Dartmouth, New Hampshire in 1966, and, in particular, John Dixon's *Growth Through English* (1967), the book that emerged from that conference. The Dartmouth conference identified three 'models' of English teaching perceived as being current on both sides of the Atlantic:

1 a skills model, concerned in particular with the mastery of literacy;

2 a cultural heritage model, concerned in particular with the study of literature as a source of personal enrichment and extended life experience; and

3 a personal growth model, which focused on the child and his/her experience and the way in which he/she used language to process experience, and hence 'grew through English'.

It was this third model that the conference favoured and which, through the medium of Dixon's book, profoundly influenced the thinking of English language educators in Australia during the late 'sixties and early 'seventies.

> By 1970 the book was widely set as a text in English teacher training programs throughout Australia. It helped to create the climate of thinking here which led to the revision of English syllabus documents. (Christie and Rothery, 1979:200)

Dixon's book was quickly followed by a series of books (Moffett, 1968; Barnes *et al*, 1969; Britton, 1970) which further elaborated and extended what had come to be known as 'the growth model', and developed a concern with language 'across the curriculum', as a resource for learning. These ideas received further currency in the influential Bullock Report, *A Language for Life* (Bullock, 1975). At the same time the rapid growth of research in the relatively new discipline of linguistics was injecting new insights on the nature of language and language development into the debate, as was the work on sociology of language carried out by Bernstein and his colleagues at the Sociological Research Unit of the University of London Institute of Education (Bernstein 1973a, 1973b).

In Australia the National Unesco Seminar on the Teaching of English held in Canberra in 1972 provided a forum for discussion and dissemination of 'the new English', as it was coming to be called, and this was continued in the work of the National Committee on English Teaching set up as a consequence of that seminar. In February, 1976 the NCET set up a subcommittee to formulate a proposal for a national project on language acquisition and development, as a result of which the Language Development Project formally commenced operations with the appointment of a full-time project officer to the staff of the Curriculum Development Centre, Canberra, in February, 1977.

The design of the project provided for a three-phase development. Phase I was to be an exploratory, data-gathering stage which would explore the context within which, and provide the conceptual basis on which, the actual business of English language curriculum development could build during Phase II, while Phase III was to provide for the dissemination and implementation of the materials developed during Phase II. Phase I of the project formally concluded with a national conference, held in Canberra in January, 1978, and its progress and outcomes have been comprehensively recorded in *Language in Education: The LDP Phase I* (Maling-Keepes and Keepes, 1979).

The Current Scene

The most recent and comprehensive account of the current scene in English language teaching is that provided by the analysis of responses to the call for submissions which constituted a central thrust of the investigatory phase of the Language Development Project (Maling-Keepes *et al.*, 1979). It is impossible to do justice here to the rich and complex tapestry woven by this analysis of submissions, and rather than misrepresent that richness and complexity by an attempted summary, I will focus on one particular motif which illuminates the theme of uncertainty and confusion with which we started this background chapter. While it would be dangerously misleading to confuse this motif with the total pattern, it is a significant element in that total pattern.

> The awarness of a period of rapid change, of community pressure, and of examination of the role of English teachers, was reflected in almost one third of the individual submissions. (*op. cit.*:79)

In their analysis of this aspect the researchers comment on the sense of concern running through many of the submissions:

> Sometimes the concern indicated a commitment; sometimes it indicated anxiety, either about the teacher's own role or the capacity to facilitate development of the child's language; sometimes it indicated a sense of helplessness and impotence when faced with the array of tasks demanded of an English teacher. (*op. cit.*:78-79)

It was also noted that this sense of concern, the awareness that there was a problem of some kind, increased as one moved through the primary school and into the secondary school. In particular, at the secondary level, 'there was considerable concern about the children's achievements in reading and "basic" language skills, but there was uncertainty as to what to do about it' (*op. cit.*:79).

Teachers were well aware that they were under attack, but disagreed on the validity of the criticisms levelled at them. So too they were well aware that they were teaching in a period of rapid change, but again disagreed in their response to this change. Not surprisingly these differing responses reflected a diversity of views and a diversity of practice. One submission saw the situation in these terms:

> There are several groups of teachers working in different directions - probably within schools and certainly from school to school. There is a minority working towards a language and learning approach to English; trying to be consistent in that approach; trying to cater for the needs of their students; and at the same time trying to combat pressures from other groups.
>
> There are a far greater number who hide behind the traditional trappings of prescriptive and highly teacher-structured English programs, ignoring the lack of efficacy, and the irrelevance to the modern student. There are others terrified by parents and the press, who change with the editorial tide. There are others who find themselves caught between the focus on language and the focus on literature, ever mindful of the 'determining' restrictions of an external examination for matriculation.

> Then there are others who have no direction who see the present situation as one of flux and are either only prepared to sit on the fence, or at the teacher's desk and let nature (or their students' nature) take its course.
>
> There are also those who feel inadequate in serving the many 'specialist' areas covered by the broad spectrum of English language. Finally, there are those who see concern for language development as their sole domain, and yet others who maintain that all teachers have a responsibility in this area. (*op. cit.*:82-83)

It would be inappropriate to end this section on the current scene without some reference to the second, developmental, phase of the Language Development Project now moving towards completion. After a number of delays caused by changes of staff and protracted negotiations with the States, Phase II of the Language Development Project finally got under way early in 1980. Eight task forces, one in each State and Territory, with their associated teacher networks, began experimental work in classrooms on a variety of English language curriculum development tasks within the overall national umbrella of the Language Development Project. The project is focused on the development of children's language capacities in school Years 5 to 8, the years of transition from primary to secondary school, and is concerned with both mother-tongue and second-language learners. The nature and diversity of project activities can be gauged from the articles by task force members included in the special issue of *English in Australia* (Australian Association for the Teaching of English, 1981) devoted to the work of the Language Development Project. Unfortunately the developmental work of the project has been prematurely curtailed with the winding down of the operations of the Curriculum Development Centre. At time of writing a limited number of materials are being prepared for publication, although it is not clear just how much of this will eventually appear in published form. The third phase of the project, the planned dissemination phase, has been abandoned.

Syllabuses and Guidelines: The Official Curriculum

A second major thrust of the investigatory phase of the Language Development Project was an analysis of curriculum documents undertaken by Frances Christie and Joan Rothery. They found 'a considerable degree of unanimity both in assumptions made about the value of language and English teaching generally, and in recommended approaches to English teaching' (Christie and Rothery, 1979:197), and concluded that 'most of the States have witnessed, and been influenced by, similar developments in designing their English syllabus documents' (*loc. cit.*).

The researchers identify two important general changes which occurred in English curriculum documents throughout Australia in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The first of these was the abandonment of prescriptive syllabuses in favour of 'statements intended to suggest guiding principles and desirable practices, rather than to prescribe in detail the kinds of methods and beliefs to be adopted in English teaching' (*op.*

cit.:198). The second important change was away from a view of language based on traditional grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence construction, and 'correct usage' to one which incorporated the ideas emerging from the Dartmouth conference and reflecting 'the Australian response to the new concerns in English teaching, many of which were raised at the Unesco seminar' (*op. cit.*:202).

The authors identify a number of language emphases which these new-style syllabuses and guidelines shared, among them a concern with personal growth through language development; a more or less explicit reliance on models of language learning in eary childhood; a view of language as a complex interrelationship between the four language 'skills' or 'arts' of listening, speaking, reading, and writing; the belief that language is learned in use; the encouragement of activities such as small group work, drama, and role play to provide a diversity of contexts for language use; the encouragement of the use of themes or units of work which integrated language study and literature study; the use of the child's own experience as a resource; recognizing and building on the language knowledge children bring with them to the classroom; an emphasis on personal and imaginative writing; an emphasis on the exploration of language through informal talk; a recognition of diversity and variety in language; a move away from the traditional view of one 'correct' form of standard English; a recognition of the need to respect the child's own use of language; and a view of the teacher as a facilitator of learning.

Christie and Rothery are critical of many perceived deficiencies in these documents, and in particular their failure to provide teachers with sufficient help in translating the new ideas into practice. They note that, in the view of many educators,

> . . . changes in practice were not as widespread as is sometimes suggested in the community. It now seems apparent . . . that teachers had insufficient understanding of the theoretical and research foundations of the syllabuses and so had great difficulty in interpreting them and acting upon them. (*op. cit.*:206)

Textbooks and Materials: The Unofficial Curriculum

The two most immediately obvious features of English language textbooks and materials is their multiplicity and their diversity, ranging from the old faithfuls ('first published 1959, reprinted annually'), their modern counterparts and their trendier imitators ('forward to fundamentals') to books and materials drawing on the latest linguistic research. A recent and extremely interesting review of English language resources (Carr, 1979) - interesting because it places the textbooks and materials reviewed in the context of the language learning models they exemplify - identifies three broad categories of 'course books and source books' in use in junior English classes in Queensland secondary schools, the first two categories in common use, the third not yet widely used but recommended for the consideration of English teachers.

The first of these broad categories identified by Carr is *The Thematic Anthology*. Such books are commonly a collection of stimulus material from a wide variety of sources, loosely organized into 'Themes' deemed to have social or personal relevance for the students and designed to stimulate a wide variety of language activities. While books of this type go back to the early sixties,

> By the early 1970s this type of book had undergone a number of changes and variant forms had begun to appear. Some remained . . . highly literary; others placed great emphasis on variety - variety of topic, genre, language type and format. While many were eclectic in their approach, most of the more recent examples were firmly based on what had come to be known as the 'growth' or 'developmental' model of English teaching. (*op. cit.*:2)

The second broad category identified by Carr is the *Traditional Language Skills Textbook*. Carr comments:

> Some of these are almost identical with books published 20 years ago; in truth, some are, save for the covers, mere facsimiles and may need to be approached with considerable caution. On the other hand, many make at least some concession to the thematic approach by incorporating small passages of literature and/or journalism and by using a sprinkling of modern illustrations. It is fashionable for books of these kinds to glory in rather hearty and plausible titles. (*op. cit.*:3)

Books in this category are based on a view of language which assumes

> . . . that student performance in written composition will be improved by their working through a large number of drill exercises, even if these are based upon very small pieces of language that have no wider context of meaning. Some also assume that explicit instruction in the terminology of traditional grammar and systematic practice in the analysis of language according to the rules of traditional grammar will result in marked improvements in student written language performance. (*loc. cit.*)

A third type of book identified by Carr is the *Broad-Based Language Study Source Book*. Books in this category differ from those in the other two categories in two main respects:

> In the first place, the new language study source books are based, at least in part, upon recent theories of the nature and functions of language. Secondly, while working within the framework of the growth model (that is, they follow the principle that language is best developed by using it), they are nevertheless committed to the belief that the process of exploring language, as it is used for living and for learning, is a legitimate and valuable activity for both teachers and learners in schools. (*op. cit.*:4)

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to set the study in the current context of English language education in Australia. In doing so we have traced the changing views of language and language education which have influenced the curriculum in English language over the past three decades, and juxtaposed them with analyses of both official

curriculum documents and textbooks and materials in current use in Australian schools in an effort to identify some of the causes for the uncertainty and confusion among teachers of English language concerning both their role and their effectiveness. Such a brief and rapid overview of a difficult and complex area is bound to be something of an oversimplification. Some no doubt will criticize the selection, others the emphases it has chosen to make. Nevertheless, it does serve the purpose of providing a necessary background to the investigation of classroom practice which constitutes the main aim of the study without, I believe, unduly distorting the complex issues with which it deals.

CHAPTER 2

BEING THERE: A TEACHER PERSPECTIVE

Crystallizing a coherent picture of current practice in English language teaching from the diverse perceptions of teachers is not an easy task. The practical pedagogy of the classroom does not readily reduce itself to neat theoretical categories or to unqualified generalizations. Not only is it common to find apparently contradictory practices co-existing within the same school; it is not unusual to find them co-existing within the same classroom, and within the practice of a single teacher. A practical eclecticism - picking up things that seem to work from a variety of sources - may well be the commonest form of practice; certainly it is more common than the 'ideal' condition of a carefully articulated theoretical position finding expression in consistent classroom practice. Thus it is not uncommon to find textbooks from all three of the categories identified by Carr (see Chapter 1) sitting happily side by side on the practising teacher's shelf, and contributing to the program-in-practice. Which is not to say that teachers are atheoretical so much as that the practical pedagogy of 'what works in the classroom' is a good deal more likely to determine what is done than any set of theoretical principles about language and language learning.

That said, it is still possible to learn a good deal about current practices in English language teaching from the data collected in the study, beginning with a broad overview of curriculum emphases in the case study schools as reflected in teacher responses to the questionnaire survey. While these data are highly aggregated, and must therefore be treated with caution, they do provide us with a benchmark from which we can begin our exploration of more complex patterns and issues.

The Teacher Sample

The teacher sample for the questionnaire survey comprised 68 teachers from the eight focused case study schools. Between 6 and 10 teachers from each school responded to the survey, with a mean response of 8.5 teachers per school. All teachers in the eight focused case study schools involved in teaching English Language Programs in the junior secondary school, with the exception of those absent from the school at the time the survey was taken, were invited to participate in the survey, and almost all responded, so that the data recorded can be considered to be representative of teacher perceptions of the curriculum in the eight focused case study schools. Since these eight schools were selected for focused case study as being representative of the range of curriculum approaches encountered in the 25 exploratory case study schools, we can have some confidence that the picture of current practice emerging from the data is reasonably

A WRITING

1 Narrative writing — A1
2 Report writing — A2
3 Formal essay writing — A3
4 Personal writing — A4
5 Editing — A5

B MECHANICS

1 Grammar — B1
2 Spelling — B2
3 Composition exercises — B3

C READING

1 Intensive reading — C1
2 Extensive reading — C2
3 Interest-based reading — C3
4 Remedial reading — C4
5 Reading comprehension — C5

D TALKING AND LISTENING

1 Small group discussion — D1
2 Drama/role play — D2
3 Public speaking — D3
4 Interviewing — D4
5 Listening comprehension — D5
6 Language variety — D6

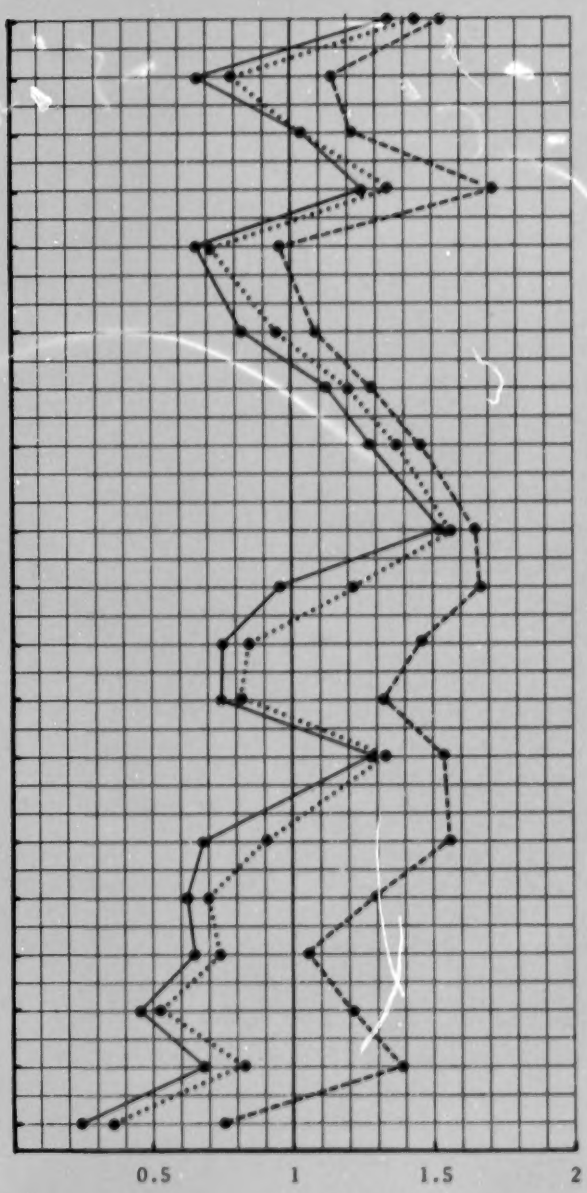

Figure 2.1 A Teacher Perspective on the Ideal (-----), the Planned (·····), and the Operative (———) Curriculum in English Language in the Junior Secondary School (N = 68)

representative of teacher perceptions of the curriculum, although there is no claim that it constitutes a random sample of schools or teachers. The interview data which provide the basis for the analyses in the latter part of this chapter were obtained from all 25 case study schools, and constituted an important part of the data used in selecting the eight schools for focused case study.

Curriculum Emphases: A Teacher Perspective

Figure 2.1 represents a generalized teacher perspective on the curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school, presented in the form of profiles based on the mean ratings allocated to each of the 19 items in the questionnaire on each of the three aspects of the curriculum surveyed - the ideal curriculum, or what ought to be taught; the planned curriculum, or what it is intended to teach; and the operative curriculum, or what is actually perceived to be taught in practice - by the 68 teachers who responded to the survey.

Perhaps the first thing we observe is the overall similarity in the shape of the three profiles, indicating a general similarity in the order of priorities accorded the various items in the ideal, the planned, and the operative curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school, with a predictable shortfall in translating the ideal into curriculum planning, and planning into curriculum practice. This similarity is particularly evident in the relationship between the planned and the operative curriculum, where the perceived gap between the intended emphasis and the emphasis achieved in practice is for the most part quite small. The perceived gap between the ideal emphasis and that achieved in practice, on the other hand, is somewhat larger and shows more variation between particular items, being least evident in the mechanics component of the curriculum (Section B) and most evident in the oral language component (Section D).

The comparison of the ideal and the operative curriculum in writing suggests that teachers are reasonably satisfied with the amount of emphasis attained on narrative writing, formal essay writing, and, to a slightly lesser extent, editing. Rather more dissatisfaction is indicated with the amount of emphasis given to report writing and personal writing. The greatest overall satisfaction is with the perceived emphasis on mechanics, with the emphasis on grammar falling a little further below the desired level than the emphasis on spelling and composition exercises, but only slightly so.

While teachers seem reasonably happy with the level of emphasis given to intensive reading and reading comprehension in the reading program, they see the emphasis on extensive reading, interest-based reading, and remedial reading falling well below the desired level. The greatest overall discrepancy is in the perceived emphasis on oral language in the operative curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school,

particularly in the emphasis given to small group discussion. The program comes closest to achieving its desired emphasis in public speaking, but even here there is a considerable shortfall.

While these relationships between aspirations, intentions, and achievement in practice are of considerable interest, they are less germane to our immediate concerns in a study investigating current practice than perceptions of the operative curriculum, since it is these which reflect what is actually happening in the classroom in relation to English language curriculum. The items perceived as receiving the greatest emphasis in the operative curriculum by our teacher sample are intensive reading (that is, the detailed study of a set book) and narrative writing, with composition exercises, reading comprehension, and personal writing all receiving substantial emphasis. Some emphasis is seen to be given to spelling, formal essay writing, extensive reading, and grammar. Somewhat less emphasis is given to the other items included in the profile, with least emphasis seen as being given to interviewing and language variety.

Looking at the profile in terms of our four major categories, we see the operative curriculum in writing as perceived by our teacher sample as giving its major emphases to narrative writing and personal writing, with some emphasis on formal essay writing. Little emphasis is given to report writing or editing. Mechanics are seen as occupying a reasonably central place in the operative curriculum, with substantial emphasis on composition exercises and spelling, and some emphasis on grammar.

In reading, intensive reading of set books and reading comprehension receive the major emphases, with some emphasis on extensive reading. Interest-based reading and remedial reading are perceived as receiving reltively less emphasis. According to teacher perceptions, oral language receives relatively little emphasis in the operative curriculum, with interviewing and language variety receiving the least emphasis.

When we look at the overall pattern of the operative curriculum in English language as revealed in the profile, it would seem that the only new element which appears to have made any inroads into the traditional curriculum in English language, at least insofar as teacher perceptions of what goes on in the classroom are concerned, is the emphasis given to personal writing; and even this may be more a product of the creative writing movement of the late 'fifties and early 'sixties than of any of the more radical movements in English language curriculum of the late 'sixties and 'seventies.

In basing our profiles on mean ratings we are, of course, obscuring a great deal of possible variation in perception, both between individual teachers and between schools. One way of economically describing the extent of this variation is by means of a statistic known as the *variance*. The larger the variance, the greater the variability of scores about the mean; the smaller the variance, the less the variability of scores about the mean. Table 2.1 sets out the item means and variances for teacher perceptions of the operative curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school. As might be

Table 2.1 Item Statistics: Teacher Perceptions of the Operative Curriculum in English Language (N = 68)

Item	Mean	Variance	Intraclass correlation coefficient
A WRITING			
1 Narrative writing	1.35	0.30	-0.02
2 Report writing	0.68	0.47	0.01
3 Formal essay writing	1.03	0.70	0.30
4 Personal writing	1.26	0.26	0.43
5 Editing	0.66	0.50	0.00
B MECHANICS			
1 Grammar	0.82	0.51	0.55
2 Spelling	1.12	0.29	0.18
3 Composition exercises	1.29	0.52	0.63
C READING			
1 Intensive reading	1.53	0.38	0.37
2 Extensive reading	0.97	0.64	0.11
3 Interest-based reading	0.76	0.49	0.19
4 Remedial reading	0.76	0.73	0.53
5 Reading Comprehension	1.29	0.58	0.45
D TALKING AND LISTENING			
1 Small group discussion	0.70	0.53	0.57
2 Drama/role-play	0.61	0.50	0.37
3 Public speaking	0.64	0.43	0.42
4 Interviewing	0.45	0.44	0.38
5 Listening comprehension	0.70	0.66	0.24
6 Language variety	0.24	0.19	0.11

expected from our discussion of current practice in Chapter 1, there is considerable variation between individual teachers in their perceptions of the operative curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school, with item variances ranging between 0.19 and 0.73. The greatest variability occurs in the amount of emphasis given to remedial reading and formal essay writing, with relatively large variances also being recorded for listening comprehension and extensive reading. The smallest variations in teacher perceptions occur in the relatively high degree of emphasis given to personal writing, narrative writing, and spelling, and the relatively small amount of emphasis given to language variety.

Another dimension of difference of interest in a study such as this is difference between schools, and a useful descriptive statistic for looking at this dimension of difference is the *intraclass correlation coefficient*. Its usefulness for our purpose here lies in the fact that when the intraclass correlation coefficient equals zero variations in perception which occur are attributable to differences within schools, not to differences

between them (Gupta, 1955; Ross, 1982). Thus, the closer the intraclass correlation is to zero, the fewer the differences between schools in the perceived emphasis on that particular item in the operative curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school; and the larger its value, the greater the differences between schools in the perceived emphasis on that particular item.

Table 2.1 provides intraclass correlation coefficients for each of the 19 items rated by our teacher sample. From the perceptions of the teachers, the greatest difference between schools lies in the perceived emphasis given to grammar, composition exercises, remedial reading, and small group discussion; with reasonably large differences also occurring in the perceived emphasis on personal writing, reading comprehension, and public speaking. Least difference between schools in the perceptions of teachers lies in the perceived emphasis given to narrative writing, report writing, and editing; with reasonably small differences in the perceived emphasis on extensive reading and language variety.

The Teacher Interviews

The presentation of interview data always poses problems for the case study researcher. The very richness of the data, which provides the major research purpose in collecting it, defies concise presentation. One can present masses of raw data: but that can be quite indigestible. One can use the 'selected quotations' approach: but the ingredients tend to reflect the taste of the cook. One can categorize, codify, and quantify: but quantification tends to obscure the qualification that more often than not lies at the heart of the matter.

Partly in consequence of these considerations, and partly in the interests of providing a way into a discussion of the issues which complements the highly generalized approach adopted so far in this chapter, a rather different method of presentation is adopted here: namely the presentation of the complete transcript of a single interview. While such a method has its own transparent limitations, it has the advantage of preserving the integrity of the data by retaining something of the richness of the detail while providing a point of entry into the analysis of the total picture. The selected transcript has been chosen not because it is typical - English language practice is far too varied for that - nor because it embodies the cherished prejudices of the researcher, but because it crystallizes many of the more persistent issues and concerns which lie at the heart of the dilemma currently facing teachers of English language. While solutions may, and frequently do, differ, the problems it raises form a recurrent underlying theme in most of the interviews collected during the study; and even those teachers who seek to minimize them sooner or later come back to acknowledging them.

The interview transcript is presented verbatim and, apart from an initial episode of

negotiation designed to clarify the purposes of the study and the kind of information being sought, in its entirety. There are points on the tape where the dialogue is obscured by the inevitable background noises of the English staffroom. Rather than make guesses at the obscured words and phrases, such points are indicated by a series of dots and a question mark placed in square brackets thus: .....? . Except for a point towards the end of the interview where the period bell sounds, followed by the inevitable hubbub of activity, these omissions do not seriously interfere with the intended meaning, and the reader should have no problem in deducing it, at least in general terms. The transcript begins at the point where the teacher begins to describe her program in English language in Years 7 and 8, the only grades in the junior secondary school which she teaches.

A Sample Interview

- Well with the juniors, with the Year 7 and 8, basically I just teach grammar. Nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, that sort of thing. Very structured course. And comprehension, from their book, *Pictorial and Practical*. And in Year 7 we just sort of initiate essay writing, descriptive essays and that sort of thing. Year 8 a little bit more argumentative type essays. And I also teach drama, a little bit of drama, ...? discussions, do a bit of poetry, theme poetry, supernatural, just do a theme, go through different poems, discuss it and have discussions and then they write their own poems and that sort of thing. A variety of different things, but basically I always get back to a very structured approach because with the juniors I think that they need a very solid grounding in basic skills rather than just being creative and airy fairy and just waffling on about some vague descriptive essay type thing whatever. Anyway it is good for discipline, they need it. They've got very structured books. We do .....? *Grammar*, it's called. Basically, it's quite boring.

- Boring for you or boring for them or boring for everyone?

- (Laughter) Not very creative. We've just done three weeks of talks. They have to present their own talks, a topic of their choice and then they have to hand in their written assignment as well, research assignment type thing. I did that basically because I'm very busy with the Year 11's at the moment, so that's enjoyable for them and it's not so much hard work for me because I don't teach. The last three weeks I've been sitting back and listening to them, so it's been rather good. The Year 7's this afternoon I'll probably just give them a comprehension exercise. Read a story and answer questions, discuss it. We might not even do any written work, just discussion, 50 minute period. Might not take that long. Might be too short. Before that they've done a lot of grammar.

- When you say grammar - what sort?

- Lots of exercises. I go right back to the basics, just to nouns, identifying nouns and changing nouns, verbs and adjectives, adverbs, knowing different types and how to recognize them in sentences, trying to improve their expression, like agreement of noun and verb, the plurals and singular, and those sorts of things. I don't know if it works successfully because it is very hard to judge from teaching grammar and trying to see whether they implement it in their writing. Same with spelling, we give them weekly spelling tests but whether that improves their spelling or not is debatable. They just learn it the period before, they learn it while they are lining

up for recess and get 20 out of 20 and the next day they won't know how to spell a word anyway. But just to do away with those sorts of things is not what the solution is. You have to try and work it out, how to improve on it. With the essay writing I think finally the best way is simply to give individual help. To come up with different questions, to go through drafts, and that sort of thing.

- They write them in class do they, and then come up if they have any problems?

- I think that is successful because they are getting a bit more individual attention that way rather than take it all up, mark it and then hand it back. I like them to do rough drafts and then hand up the polished ..... . The main thing is when they write they seem to write really boring essays. 'Then I went home, then I had dinner, then I ...', this sort of thing. Always 'then'. I try to get them to add more variety, use more descriptive words, and things like that.

- Does it work?

- (Laughter) Sometimes it works, sometimes they get the idea. After a while. But then again I had a Year 7 last year and a Year 8 this year, the same class. I've taught them for two years and I taught them very similar things last year. I know we went over essay work last year, and now we are doing more, and the things I taught them they've forgotten. I find that interesting. Their retention level's very minimal. Over the Christmas holidays they forget lots of things. I find in lots of ways that in 7 and 8 I teach very similar things. I could give a similar lesson to both levels at the same time, a little bit more in depth for Year 8.

- And the grammar lessons you do, do you relate them to their written work or do you follow through exercises?

- Usually we talk about the grammar, blackboard notes, then do exercises, then do a written piece of work trying to exemplify a particular thing I've just taught. Nouns or something, descriptive adjectives. Write a piece of writing using these adjectives. That is the sort of procedure I follow. Talk and chalk lesson, then lots of exercises using the grammar books, and then some sort of piece of writing to implement what they've learnt. I do it in a block. I don't do it one lesson a week, I do it for three weeks or something like that, and I do three weeks of poetry, three weeks of talks, or something. I found that the other system didn't work. If I had spelling one day and grammar the next, comprehension the next, it was just all too bitty. I couldn't get through much in one lesson, 40 minutes. I couldn't get through much at all so I felt the block system was much better. But by the end of it they seem to, they get tired of say something like grammar after about two or three weeks, so I always end up with a test (Laughter). And if I gave that test four weeks later, they'd do abysmally, you know. Because we have been doing it intensively for three weeks or so they achieve fairly well in that test. It's not really a true indication of their ability. So, that's about it.

- You mentioned the weekly spelling test. Do you give weekly spelling tests?

- Yes I do that.

- And where do those words come from?

- Usually from graded word books. A graded word book we use. It's very old.

- Is that fairly regular through the school, or do teachers just use their own ... .

- No. 7, 8, 9 have these.

- I see, the kids all have them.

- Yes. You see, that was mine when I was a kid at school. So it's really very old.

- Yes, Foster and Bryant, eh? Yes, I remember that when I started teaching in the 'fifties. I remember Foster and Bryant.

- This school used to have, er, what was the other one? The younger version of *Mastering Words. Mastering English? Mastering Words*, that's right. It had a vocab section and spelling. We had that for a number of years, and then we changed to this.

- Yes, I suppose the interesting question, one part I'm interested in is some of the observations you were making there, because I happen to have a couple of kids of my own who do very well at spelling tests and are still bad spellers, so I have a parental interest as well as a professional one in this issue.

- I've done all sorts of things over the years, I've bribed with chocolate frogs, with spelling, getting spelling stars, gold stars, silver stars all sorts of things but the point is they'll learn them just prior to the test and then they just don't have any retention of how to spell it or even when they are writing they just don't spell it correctly, they just don't see the importance. In a spelling test they do, but not elsewhere. There has been a whole movement in this school though to try and mark in every subject the spelling, to mark them down as a poor speller in every subject so that they just don't see it as isolated only to English. So we've got a spelling list for the whole school, for each subject in the school, for each level and each child is given it. We're supposed to also do spelling, not only from say that, but also from their spelling list. In all subjects.

- Yes, I suppose the key on this is of course - does the spelling improve? Does the spelling improve as a result or does it not? I got the impression from what you were saying earlier that it probably doesn't.

  Well the thing is if we take away that weekly spelling list, spelling tests, you don't have anything left, so what can you do? Perhaps I think spelling at the beginning of every lesson is a good idea. But if you say something doesn't work, you've got to substitute it with something else, and I haven't found a good substitute. So I stick with that sort of thing. I stick with very traditional things that I was taught when I was a kid and I felt that they were effective then, more effective than some of the ideas that are going around today that, you know, you've got to be creative, and if they write eventually their writing will improve and this sort of thing. I think that's wrong. I had very structured lessons. I remember learning spelling every week and doing all sorts of things and taking a pride in getting 20 out of 20. I don't know that it improved my spelling, but I wasn't a poor speller. There must be some sort of correlation. I wasn't a particularly good one in grade school, but in high school I certainly improved over the years. I just relate it back to my own experiences, like we did lots of spelling games .....? they, they think they're just games. Not something like Hang the Butcher, but even that has got some value in it. But see there were a whole lot of spelling games that I was taught when I was just a kid, and they're really, they're very good, they're good fun, the kids love them, and I'm always using them to fill in a spare 10 minutes at the end of a period, the whole period sometimes, and perhaps it helps them. I don't know. I think kids should learn, and I tell everyone, you've got to learn 10 words a night. You can't learn 50 words, you've got to learn 10 words, every night. That's your English homework, for the whole of the year. It's just got to be on a consistent basis. Like in maths, if you learn tables, how do you learn them? Only by rote. Just sort of by knowing the word, and recognizing it, able to sound it out, and then spell it. Correctly. But if you don't take that trouble initially and put a bit of hard work

into it, I don't think it is going to improve it. And I think that in the grade - the primary schools - they have different sorts of teaching methods, some phonetically sounding it out and some just do it by sight, by recognition ..... period bell sounds .....? you've got to be able to spell these words, now. .....? but some are lost. I'll have to go now. I have a class.

- Well thank you very much indeed for that. That was exactly the sort of thing I wanted. I'm ...

* * * *

Comment

The interview is frank and to the point. It speaks for itself; so that our task here is less one of interpretation than of relating it to the total body of interview data. The issues raised are persistent ones: the role of grammar; the problem of spelling; the uninspired mediocrity of much school writing; the lack of transfer of drill in mechanics to writing in practice; the nature of assessment and the tenuous connection between 'achievement' and meaningful learning; the frustrating gap between teaching and learning. All these are familiar themes, recurring in one form or another throuhout the body of interview data.

If there is one thing that the supporters of traditional methods and the advocates of innovation are largely in agreement on it is that for many, perhaps most, students the traditional methods do not seem to be working. What they differ on is whether the newer methods work any better. Our sample interviewee is quite clear in her rejection of the newer methods. She seems in little doubt about the propriety of the traditional methods, but has considerable doubts about their efficacy. For her the solution lies in a more rigorous application of traditional methods, and the search for better ways of rendering them effective. For other teachers this lack of effectiveness is sufficient reason for abandoning traditional methods and experimenting with alternative approaches. Others, perhaps the majority, share all the doubts of both groups, but none of the convictions, moving uneasily between the traditional and the innovative in a search for the right 'mix', the mix that will work. Sometimes of course this is a conscious and planned eclecticism; but for many teachers it is confessedly an *ad hoc* response to uncertainty.

The role of grammar is clearly one of the most contentious points at issue in the debate on the English language curriculum in the junior secondary school, at least at the level of practice. As our measurement data have indicated, and as the interview data confirm, it is one of the most conspicuous items of difference both between schools and between teachers within schools on the approach adopted to the teaching of English language. While it would be misleading to suggest that all or even most teachers accord it the central role in the program that it clearly occupies in our sample interview,

it is nevertheless true to say that most of the teachers interviewed give it some emphasis in their programs.

It is also clear from the interview data that the grammar of the 'eighties is not quite the same thing as the grammar of the 'fifties, despite the tendency to rely on the same or similar textbooks. Formal parsing and analysis - the backbone of the 'fifties grammar lesson - no longer seems to play any significant role in the English language program. Rather, an understanding of grammatical terminology and grammatical relationships as a means of describing language structure and as a basis for 'sentence correction' would seem to be what most teachers mean by 'teaching grammar' in the 'eighties; although it is also probably true that the term 'grammar' does not mean quite the same thing to the different teachers interviewed.

While most teachers interviewed would share our interviewee's doubts about the transfer of grammatical knowledge to any discernible improvement in students' writing, they nevertheless see it as necessary in providing a language of discourse about language, an essential tool for the discussion of students' writing and the correction of errors. Whether this implies that grammar is seen as serving a mainly editorial function is less clear, but it would seem to be a reasonable interpretation of prevailing teacher attitudes as revealed in the interview data. Few of the teachers interviewed see meaning and convention as providing satisfactory alternatives to grammar in the performance of this function, although some have doubts about the cost-benefit of the time spent in teaching grammar. Like our interviewee, most go back to their own experience, to their own use of grammar in performing the editorial function in their own writing. It is rare to find any reference to research, or to the supposedly seminal writers in the revolution in English language curriculum theory outlined in Chapter 1.

It is curious that such a comparatively surface feature as spelling should loom so large among the concerns of English teachers as it obviously does, not only in our sample interview but in most of the interview data collected in the study. But we must not be too quick to attribute this to the pedantry of the English teacher. Society, too, places a high value on correct spelling. Employers tend to accept or reject job applicants on the basis of it. Parents tend to judge their child's progress at school on the basis of it. Teachers in other subject areas - and perhaps more importantly examiners in public examinations - tend 'to mark them down as a poor speller'. It is almost as if we, as a society, value being able to spell a word correctly more highly than being able to use it precisely, or even with understanding. Given that teachers tend to reflect prevailing social attitudes rather than to mould them, it is hardly surprising that spelling assumes such importance in the catalogue of 'problem areas' identified by teachers in our case study schools.

While the amount of emphasis given to spelling in the program described in our sample interview may well be exceptional, there are few English teachers who would not

share the concerns expressed here, or the despair of finding workable solutions to the 'problem'. Motivation is generally perceived to be of central importance to the problem, although achievement motivation - the desire 'to get 20 out of 20' - hardly seems adequate to the task. As with grammatical knowledge, there seems to be little discernible transfer to the written work of students. 'They just don't see the importance.' Some teachers in our sample have observed an improvement in this with age, suggesting that a concern with correct spelling may be a function of increasing maturity. Others have found that the publication of students' written work provides a marked stimulus to motivation. Teachers, it would seem, do not rate very highly as an 'audience'.

These however are only particular instances of the more general problem of transfer: of a perceived lack of any clear relationship between the work done in language lessons and the general language development of students; and this in turn is related to the problem of assessment: 'if I gave them that test four weeks later, they'd do abysmally, you know'. No doubt there is also a connection here with the perceived lack of interest on the part of both teachers and students - 'basically, it's quite boring' - in much of the work done in the English language lesson. Before pursuing these imponderables further, however, it would be useful to examine student perceptions of the curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school for the light they may have to shed on the issues thrown up by our analysis of the teacher perspective.

CHAPTER 3

BEING THERE: A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Except for studies focusing on student achievement, the student experience of the curriculum has been largely neglected by educational researchers. Quite apart from the relevance of this experience to curriculum planning, it could be argued that without it our capacity to understand the curriculum lacks an important dimension. This study has attempted to provide that dimension by means of both measurement data and class interviews designed to parallel as far as possible the data obtained on teacher perceptions.

The Student Sample

The student sample comprised 420 students from Years 9 and 10 in the eight focused case study schools. At least one Year 9 and one Year 10 class from each school was included in the sample. While the selection of classes was dependent on the convenience of the school and the realities of timetabling, care was taken to ensure that classes were not atypical. Years 9 and 10 were chosen because they represent students at a point when all or most of the intake group are still at school and have had enough experience of the school's program to have developed informed opinions. Since the eight focused case study schools were selected as being representative of the range of curriculum approaches encountered in the 25 exploratory case study schools, we can have some confidence that the picture of current practice emerging from the data is reasonably representative of the student experience of the curriculum, although there is no claim that it constitutes a random sample of student perceptions.

Curriculum Emphases: A Student Perspective

The measurement data on student perceptions of curriculum emphases was obtained from a set of Q-sort cards paralleling the items in the teacher questionnaire, as described in the introductory chapter. Figure 3.1 represents a generalized student perspective on the curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school, presented in the form of profiles based on the mean ratings allocated to each of 19 items included in the set of Q-sort cards on two aspects of the curriculum - the ideal curriculum, or what ought to be taught; and the operative curriculum, or what is actually perceived to be taught in practice - by the 428 students included in the sample. Students were not asked to rate their perceptions of the planned curriculum since it was assumed that, realistically, in most schools students would have very little involvement with or understanding of the curriculum planning process.

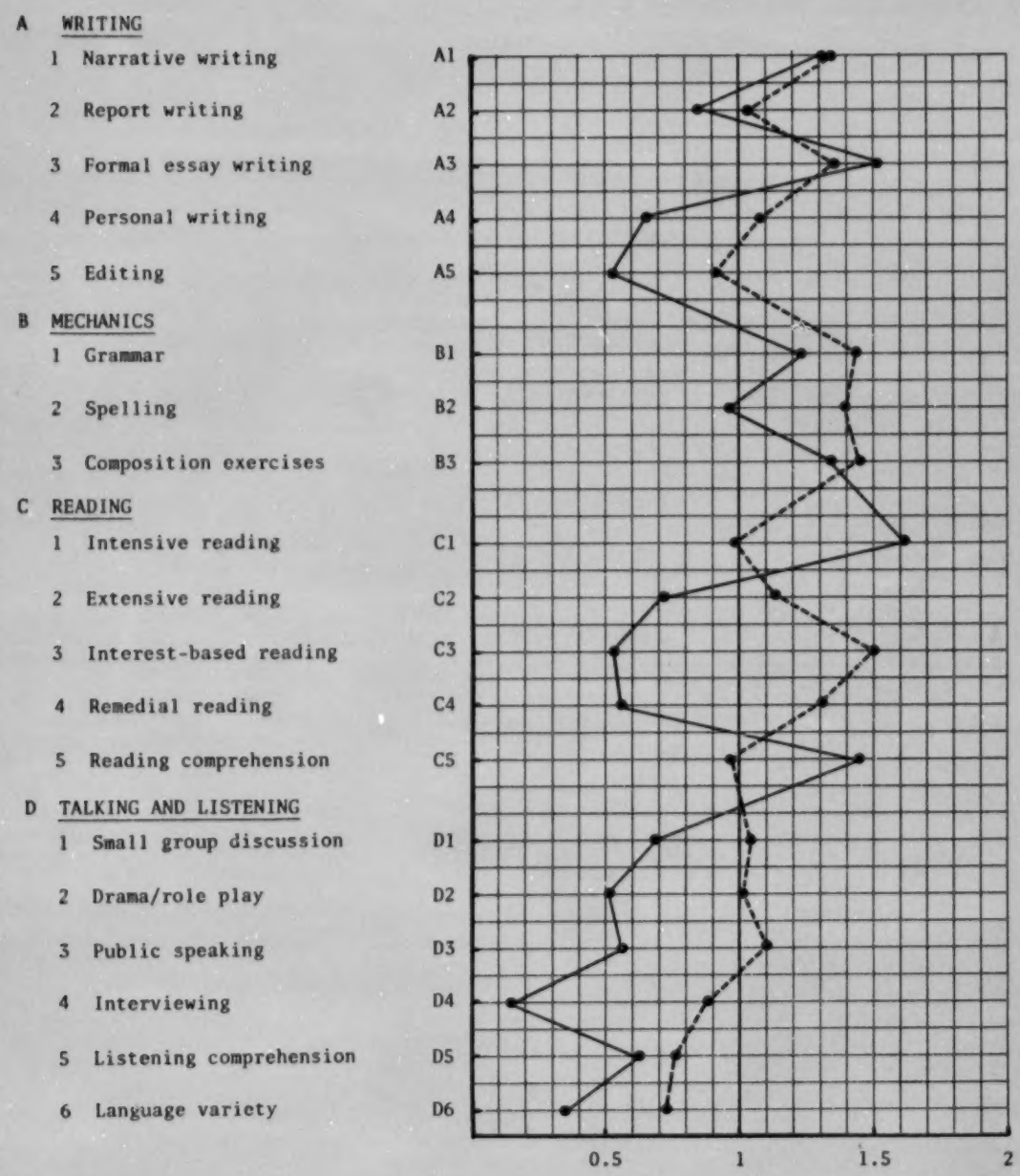

Figure 3.1 A Student Perspective on the Ideal (------) and the Operative (———) Curriculum in English Language in the Junior Secondary School (N = 428)

Perhaps the first thing we notice is the difference in the shape of the two profiles, indicating that, unlike their teachers, students perceive not only a difference in the level of emphasis between their ideal and their operative curriculum, but also a difference in the order of priorities accorded the various items. This dissatisfaction with the order of priorities is most evident in the reading component of the program (Section C), and least evident in the mechanics component (Section B). Dissatisfaction with the level of emphasis is most evident in the reading program (Section C) and certain aspects of the oral language program (Section D).

The comparison of the ideal and the operative curriculum in writing suggests that students are reasonably well satisfied with the amount of emphasis given to narrative writing, report writing, and formal essay writing in the operative curriculum, although they see the emphasis on formal essay writing as slightly greater than desirable, and the emphasis on report writing as slightly less than desirable. They are somewhat less satisfied with the emphasis on personal writing and editing. In the mechanics component of the curriculum they are reasonably well satisfied with the emphasis given to composition exercises and, to a slightly lesser extent, grammar, but they see spelling receiving somewhat less emphasis than is desirable.

It is the reading program which produces the greatest degree of dissatisfaction among students, both in the order of priorities attached to the various items and in the level of emphasis they receive. Students see far too much emphasis placed on the intensive reading of set books and on reading comprehension, and far too little on interest-based reading, remedial reading, and, to a slightly lesser extent, on extensive reading. With the exception of listening comprehension, the oral language program also falls well below the expectations of students, with the greatest shortfall occurring on the amount of emphasis given to interviewing.

While these relationships between expectations and perceived practice are of considerable interest, it is student perceptions of the operative curriculum that are of more interest to the aims of the study, since they reflect, from the viewing or receiving end, what is actually seen to be happening in the classroom in relation to current practices in English language teaching in the junior secondary school. The items perceived as receiving the greatest emphasis in the operative curriculum by our student sample are intensive reading and formal essay writing, closely followed by reading comprehension, composition exercises, narrative writing, and grammar. Some emphasis is seen to be given to spelling and report writing, with somewhat less emphasis on the other items in the profile, particularly interviewing and language variety.

Looking at the profile in terms of our four major categories, we see the operative curriculum in writing as perceived by our student sample as giving its major emphases to formal essay writing and narrative writing, with some emphasis on report writing. Little emphasis is given to personal writing or editing. Mechanics are seen as occupying a

reasonably important place in the operative curriculum, with substantial emphasis on composition exercises and grammar, and some emphasis on spelling.

Students see the operative curriculum in reading as placing its major emphases on the intensive reading of set books and on reading comprehension, with relatively little emphasis on extensive reading, interest-based reading, or remedial reading. Relatively little emphasis is seen as being given to oral language, with interviewing and language variety receiving the least emphasis.

When we look at the overall pattern of the operative curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school as it is perceived by students, it would seem that, despite popular beliefs to the contrary, the traditional curriculum in English language is still firmly entrenched, with formal essays, narrative composition, the mechanics, and the intensive study of set books continuing to occupy pride of place. There is little evidence here that the newer ideas in English language curriculum discussed in Chapter 1 have made any substantial inroads into classroom practice, at least insofar as the perceptions of students are concerned.

As with teachers, there is considerable variation between individual students in their perceptions of the operative curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school (Table 3.1), with item variances ranging between 0.15 and 0.62. The greatest variability occurs in the amount of emphasis given to narrative writing and spelling, with relatively large variances also being recorded for report writing, grammar, and listening comprehension. The smallest variations among individual students occur in the perceived emphasis on interviewing and language variety, which students are generally agreed receive relatively little emphasis in the curriculum in most schools.

In looking at the differences between schools in student perceptions of the operative curriculum as indicated by the intraclass correlation coefficients also recorded in Table 3.1, we note that the greatest difference occurs in the amount of emphasis given to grammar, with reasonably large differences also occurring in the amount of emphasis given to intensive reading, extensive reading, and small group discussion. Least difference between schools in the perceptions of students occurs in the amount of emphasis given to personal writing, public speaking, language variety, and listening comprehension; with reasonably small differences in the perceived emphasis on remedial reading, interviewing, and editing; all of which are perceived by students in most schools as receiving relatively little emphasis in the operative curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school.

The Class Interviews

As with the teacher interviews, the most difficult problem in the presentation of the class interview data is finding a way into it which does not do violence to the integrity

Table 3.1 Item Statistics: Student Perceptions of the Operative Curriculum in English Language (N = 428)

Item	Mean	Variance	Intraclass correlation coefficient
A WRITING			
1 Narrative writing	1.31	0.62	0.10
2 Report writing	0.86	0.56	0.16
3 Formal essay writing	1.51	0.49	0.27
4 Personal writing	0.67	0.45	0.00
5 Editing	0.52	0.53	0.06
B MECHANICS			
1 Grammar	1.23	0.56	0.51
2 Spelling	0.98	0.61	0.13
3 Composition exercises	1.33	0.52	0.10
C READING			
1 Intensive reading	1.61	0.45	0.37
2 Extensive reading	0.71	0.54	0.38
3 Interest-based reading	0.53	0.52	0.29
4 Remedial reading	0.56	0.45	0.05
5 Reading comprehension	1.45	0.47	0.18
D TALKING AND LISTENING			
1 Small group discussion	0.69	0.51	0.32
2 Drama/role-play	0.51	0.45	0.21
3 Public speaking	0.57	0.42	0.01
4 Interviewing	0.15	0.15	0.05
5 Listening comprehension	0.62	0.55	0.02
6 Language variety	0.35	0.32	0.01

and complexity of the data itself. Unfortunately the presentation of a single case study interview is not appropriate in this case, since, as will be readily understood, a good deal of the discussion is interspersed with references which are teacher-specific and not always fair. Luckily, however, there is a way into the classroom interview data through the analysis of a projective device which was initially intended as an activity to open up the area and provide a stimulus to discussion, but which has proved to be very interesting as a source of data both in itself and in relation to the subsequent class discussions. Students were asked to write down on a card provided the first five words that came into their heads when they thought of English language lessons. The cards were collected and spread out on the teacher's desk, providing a device from which the researcher could explore further the implications of commonly recurring words, or elicit further explanation of some of the more obscure references. Since the responses were anonymous, no student had to own up to having written any particular word, and could join in the discussion without feeling threatened.

Table 3.2 Classification of Student Responses on Open-ended Projective Device (N = 428)

Response category	Frequency of Responses: Respondents %	Total responses %
A WRITING		16.0
. writing	41.3	
. essay(s)	37.1	
. other	5.6	
B MECHANICS		9.0
. spelling	24.4	
. grammar	15.0	
. other	8.5	
C READING		16.2
. reading	43.7	
. comprehension	21.1	
. book(s)/novel	11.7	
. other	8.5	
D ORAL LANGUAGE		5.5
. talks/talking	11.3	
. listening	5.6	
. discussion/discussing	5.2	
. other	7.0	
E LANGUAGE (GENERAL)		3.8
. stories	6.6	
. language	6.1	
. other	7.0	
F SCHOOLING (GENERAL)		22.6
. work/working	32.9	
. homework/assignments	15.0	
. teacher/teacher's name	15.0	
. bludge/bludging/slack	7.5	
. tired/tiring	6.6	
. miscellaneous behaviour	27.7	
. miscellaneous procedural	10.3	
. miscellaneous physical	9.9	
. other	10.8	
G ATTITUDES/POSITIVE		3.8
. interesting	5.2	
. other	14.6	
H ATTITUDES/NEGATIVE		20.1
. boring	51.2	
. useless/waste of time/etc.	9.9	
. dull/uninteresting/etc.	8.9	
. yuk!	7.5	
. miscellaneous abusive/dislike/distaste	25.4	
. other	2.8	
J OTHER		3.0
. miscellaneous	15.5	

As a discussion starter the device worked extremely well. It was usually possible to start off proceedings on a light-hearted note, and get the class interested and involved in the discussion. What was less expected was that the data themselves would produce such a revealing insight into the student experience of the curriculum.

These data are summarized in Table 3.2. The most frequently occurring words have been listed, with the percentage of respondents in the total sample (N = 428) who recorded them as one of the five words first occurring to them when they thought of English language lessons. The words have been grouped into nine arbitrary categories for convenience of presentation, and the percentage of total responses falling into each category is recorded in the table.

One way into a discussion of the rather daunting amount of detail in the table is to look at the 10 most frequently occurring words among the responses, and to examine their implications for current practice in English language curriculum as it is perceived by students. The 'top ten', together with the percentage of respondents recording them as one of the first five words they associated with English language lessons, are listed below.

1	boring	51.2%
2	reading	43.7%
3	writing	41.3%
4	essay(s)	37.1%
5	work/working	32.9%
6	spelling	24.4%
7	comprenension	21.1%
8-10	grammar	15.0%
	homework/assignments	15.0%
	teacher/teacher's name	15.0%

It comes as something of a shock to find that more than half the students in the sample wrote down 'boring' as one of the first five words they thought of in association with English language lessons. It is perhaps even more of a shock to find that for one in five (20.2%) it was the *first* word they thought of. In fact, so regular was this pattern that it became possible to predict with reasonable accuracy the frequency of the word's occurrence in any class, and this became quite an attention-gathering opening gambit for the researcher during the later class interviews before even looking at what had been written on the cards. While much of this is no doubt attributable to a general response to schooling - other subject areas may not fare any better - we cannot afford to minimize its implications for the English language curriculum in the junior secondary school. We are reminded of the observations of the teacher in our sample interview in the previous chapter: 'basically, it's quite boring'.

It is much less surprising to find 'reading' and 'writing' occupying second and third position on the table, with each being recorded by almost half of the students in the sample. When we note however that 'essay' or 'essays' occupies the fourth position, being recorded by more than a third of the students in the sample, we are forcibly reminded of the dominance of the written mode in the English language curriculum in the junior secondary school.

One in three students wrote down 'work' or 'working' as one of the first five words they associated with English language lessons, and almost one in six wrote down 'homework' or 'assignments'. One's reaction to this will no doubt depend on the strength of one's adherence to the Protestant ethic, but it does serve to cast doubt on one of the commoner jibes thrust at English teachers, particularly by their colleagues in other subject areas. And while we are on the subject of myths, it is interesting to note the prominent place occupied by mechanics in our 'top ten' table, with one in four students recording 'spelling', one in five 'comprehension', and one in seven 'grammar' in their five-word lists.

The remaining member of our 'top ten', the word 'teacher' or the name of a teacher, is of little interest to the aims of the study, but hardly a surprising inclusion.

When we come to look at the data in the table in terms of the categories to which responses have been assigned, equally interesting patterns begin to emerge. If we order the nine categories in terms of 'popularity' as indicated by the percentage of total student responses falling into each category, our category league table is as follows:

1	Schooling (General)	22.6%
2	Attitudes/Negative	20.1%
3	Reading	16.2%
4	Writing	16.0%
5	Mechanics	9.0%
6	Oral Language	5.5%
7/8	Language (General)	3.8%
	Attitudes/Positive	3.8%
9	Other	3.0%

Perhaps it is not surprising to find that words associated with the general topic of schooling make up the largest group of responses, with between a quarter and a fifth of all responses falling into this category. While many of these are largely irrelevant to our interests in this study - for example the fairly large collection of miscellaneous words relating to classroom behaviour and procedures and the physical environment of the school - some do have relevance to current practices in English language curriculum. The more important of these - 'work/working' and 'homework/assignments' - have already been noted in our discussion of the 'top ten' most frequently occurring words, although it

is worth noting that there is a minority of dissenters (7.5%) who recorded 'bludge', 'bludging', or 'slack' in their list of five words. Perhaps however the 6.6% of respondents who recorded 'tired' or 'tiring' serve to reinforce the verdict of the majority!

Of somewhat more interest is the relatively small proportion of students - approximately one student in 25, or one student per class, on average, in each case - who included words related to learning (knowledge/learning/understanding) or intellectual activity (thinking/reasoning/reflecting) in their five most immediate associations with English language lessons; and this is reinforced by the infrequency with which such issues surfaced in the class interviews. Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect much commitment to educational or intellectual values in the junior secondary school, but the point is worth making in view of the predominantly academic orientation of the curriculum. This comment is not necessarily intended to question that orientation but rather to draw attention to its implications for the educational experience of the majority of students in the junior secondary school.

Perhaps there is some connection to be made here with the fact that the second most populous category consists of words expressing negative attitudes. One in five responses - or one per student on average - fell into this category. By contrast less than one in 25 responses consisted of words expressing positive attitudes. By far the most common of these negative attitude words, as we have already noted, was 'boring'; but if we add to this the one in 10 students recording words indicative of pointlessness ('useless', 'waste of time', for example) and the slightly smaller proportion including synonyms for boring ('dull', 'uninteresting', for example) we are driven to conclude that a sizeable proportion of students in the junior secondary school find the English language curriculum to say the least unstimulating. Added to this, approximately one in every three students recorded terms of abuse, or words expressing dislike or distaste, the commonest of these being 'yuk!', which was included as one of their five responses by 7.5 per cent of students.

As we have noted earlier, much of this may reflect more general attitudes to schooling, and it would certainly be unfair to lay the blame solely at the door of the English language curriculum. Nevertheless, it is clear from the lively and sometimes heated discussions that took place in the classroom interviews on this issue that for many students English language lessons are tedious and often unpleasant experiences. It is also fair to say that in almost every class English language had its defenders, although in most cases these tended to be in the minority.

It will no doubt come as some relief to find that reading and writing occupy third and fourth places on the ladder, with approximately one-third of responses falling into one or other of these two categories, and almost equally divided between them. In general the responses in these two categories reinforce the conclusions already drawn from the profile data, with the next most common response to the word 'reading' itself

being 'comprehension', and the next most common response to the word 'writing' itself being 'essay' or 'essays'. So far as the reading area is concerned the general picture revealed by the measurement and projective data of a focus on the intensive study of set books and on reading comprehension is reinforced by the data from the classroom interviews. So far as writing is concerned, however, the classroom interview data contain some very interesting insights which, while not negating the general emphases indicated in the measurement and projective data, certainly add a further dimension to them.

It would appear, for example, from an analysis of the classroom interview data that the two commonest writing tasks which students in many, if not most, classrooms find themselves engaged in are copying down notes from the blackboard and summarizing chapters of their set books, both of which they find tedious and, in the latter case, pointless. Another revealing insight is that for most students the principal, and in many cases the sole, purpose for school writing is assessment. If it is not going to be marked, they are not interested in it; and it is the mark that counts. It would seem that most students pay little attention to errors, or to written comments on their work, and few claim to make any effort to incorporate these into improved performance on subsequent work. Sadly there is little evidence of a sense of developing competency in their writing, and little evidence of a sense of pleasure; although some students with high achievement motivation are conscious of a need to impress the teacher. Certainly there are individual exceptions to this general picture, but their voices are rather muted in the mass of the interview data collected during the present study. Perhaps, too, individual student interviews would have allowed more of these positive orientations to come out - there is always some reluctance to go against the majority in group interviews - but this was beyond the resources of the study.

Mid-position on the table is occupied by words relating to the mechanics of language, with almost one in 10 responses falling into this category. By far the most frequent of these is 'spelling', which was included in their list of five by approximately one in five students, with 'grammar' occurring in the lists of approximately one in seven students. This would tend to reinforce the evidence of the Q-sort data that the mechanics continue to occupy a reasonably secure position in the English language curriculum in the junior secondary school.

The evidence of the Q-sort data is also reinforced by the relatively lowly position on the table occupied by oral language, with little more than one in 20 responses falling into this category. If however we combine the responses 'talk' and 'talking' with 'discussion' and 'discussing', one or another of which found their way into the lists of one in six students, the position does look a little brighter; although there is an ambiguity about the response 'talking' which would suggest some caution in any interpretation we place on these figures.

Seventh place was shared by responses relating to language in general and responses expressing positive attitudes to English language lessons, each accounting for about one in 25 responses. Some of the words included in the general language category were placed there because they were ambiguous - 'stories', for example, could refer to reading or writing, or even conceivably to oral language - others, such as the word 'language' itself, because they were pervasive.

Of more interest is the relative infrequency of responses expressing positive attitudes to English language lessons, especially when contrasted with the frequency of words expressing negative attitudes, which outnumbered them five to one. While it is heartening to find that one in 20 students found their English language lessons sufficiently interesting for that to be one of the first five words that occurred to them, it is somewhat disturbing to find that 'necessary' or 'important' only occurred to 1.4 per cent of students as one of their first five associations. While it is clear from the class interview data that a much greater proportion than this would concede the importance of English language learning in their general education, it is also clear that there are many students in the junior secondary school who reject its value and question its relevance to their needs, at least insofar as they experience it in the English language classroom.

The remaining category, accounting for three per cent of all responses, was made up of a miscellaneous set of responses which could not be readily classified under any of the other categories.

Perhaps the picture emerging from these data is a misleadingly gloomy one. Students, after all, do not often get the opportunity to express their views on the curriculum to a public audience, and no doubt the temptation to vent their frustrations not only with English language lessons but with schooling in general proved too great for some. But in addition to providing a way into the class interview data they do nicely complement the Q-sort data in providing a more rounded picture of the curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school as it is perceived by those who are, for the most part, on the receiving end of it.

CHAPTER 4

PULLING IT TOGETHER: A RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

It will be clear from our analyses in the previous two chapters that while teachers and students share a good deal in common in their perceptions of the curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school, there are also some marked differences of viewpoint. The purpose of this chapter is to explore these varying perceptions from the point of view of the researcher in an attempt to clarify the complex patterns of agreement and disagreement revealed in the data, beginning with a comparison of teacher and student perceptions as revealed in their responses to the questionnaire and Q-sort items.

In comparing profiles, use will be made of two measures of profile similarity, the *product moment correlation* (r) and the *distance measure* (D). The product moment correlation is useful, since it provides us with a measure of the degree of similarity between the *shape* of the two profiles; in other words, of the *relative emphasis* placed by the two groups of respondents being compared on the various facets of English language learning represented by the items in the profile. What the correlation coefficient does not tell us, however, is the degree of similarity in the *level of emphasis* accorded the various items of English language learning. This is where the distance measure (D) can provide us with valuable additional information, since it takes into account level and dispersion as well as shape (Nunnally, 1967). By making use of both these measures, the correlation coefficient and the distance measure, we have a simple but effective method of comparing profiles.

While correlation coefficients are readily interpretable, distance measures are less so, since they are dependent on the measurement scale being used and the number of items in the profiles being compared. For the curriculum profiles being compared in the present study, distance measures could range, theoretically, between 0, if the two profiles were identical, and 8.72, the measure that would occur if the two profiles were completely polarized. In practice, distance measures in the present study range between 0.48 and 3.75, with a mean of D = 2.06 and a median of D = 2.06.

Table 4.1 summarizes the profile comparison data for the comparisons made in Chapters 2 and 3. Correlation coefficients are entered in the upper right-hand segments of the table in standard type-face, distance measures are entered in the lower left-hand segments in italics. If we look first at the data on teacher perceptions, we can note that the very close relationship between the planned and the operative curriculum observed in our discussion in Chapter 2 is reflected in the high correlation coefficient (r = 0.99) and the small distance measure (D = 0.48). Similarly our observation that, while teachers seem relatively satisfied with the overall pattern of priorities in their

Table 4.1 Profile Comparison Data for Teacher and Student Perceptions of the Ideal, the Planned, and the Operative Curriculum in English Language[1]

	Teachers			Students	
	Ideal	Planned	Operative	Ideal	Operative
Ideal	-	0.77	0.71	-	0.43
Planned	*1.79*	-	0.99	-	-
Operative	*2.21*	*0.48*	-	*2.06*	-

1 Correlation coefficients are entered in the table in standard type-face, distance measures in italics.

program-in-practice, they perceive a predictable shortfall in translating their ideal into planning and their planning into practice, is reflected in the reasonably high correlation coefficients between the ideal and the planned (r = 0.77) and the ideal and the operative curriculum (r = 0.71), and the progressively larger distance measure (D = 1.79, D = 2.21 respectively). Students, on the other hand, as was observed in Chapter 3, see their dissatisfaction with the program-in-practice as lying more with curriculum priorities than with level of emphasis, and this is reflected in the somewhat lower correlation coefficient (r = 0.43) and the moderate distance measure (D = 2.06).

The Ideal Curriculum

Figure 4.1 compares the perceptions of our teacher sample, represented on the graph by the unbroken line, with those of our student sample, represented on the graph by the broken line, on the ideal curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school. The overall comparison between the two profiles suggests that, while teachers do tend to give somewhat more emphasis in their ideal curriculum to most of the items included in the profile than do students, there is no marked disagreement on level of emphasis, as is indicated by the comparatively small distance measure (D = 1.59). The relatively low correlation between the two profiles (r = 0.23), however, indicates somewhat more disagreement on the relative emphasis which should be given to the various items included in the profile.

The greatest discrepancies occur on the perceived emphasis which should be given to personal writing, intensive reading, and listening comprehension; with reasonably large discrepancies also occurring on the desirable emphasis on reading comprehension, extensive reading, and small group discussion. In each case teachers give these items substantially greater emphasis in their ideal curriculum than do students. Students and teachers are most closely in agreement on the level of emphasis which should be given to editing, composition exercises, interest-based reading, remedial reading, public speaking, and language variety.

A WRITING

1 Narrative writing — A1
2 Report writing — A2
3 Formal essay writing — A3
4 Personal writing — A4
5 Editing — A5

B MECHANICS

1 Grammar — B1
2 Spelling — B2
3 Composition exercises — B3

C READING

1 Intensive reading — C1
2 Extensive reading — C2
3 Interest-based reading — C3
4 Remedial reading — C4
5 Reading comprehension — C5

D TALKING AND LISTENING

1 Small group discussion — D1
2 Drama/role play — D2
3 Public speaking — D3
4 Interviewing — D4
5 Listening comprehension — D5
6 Language variety — D6

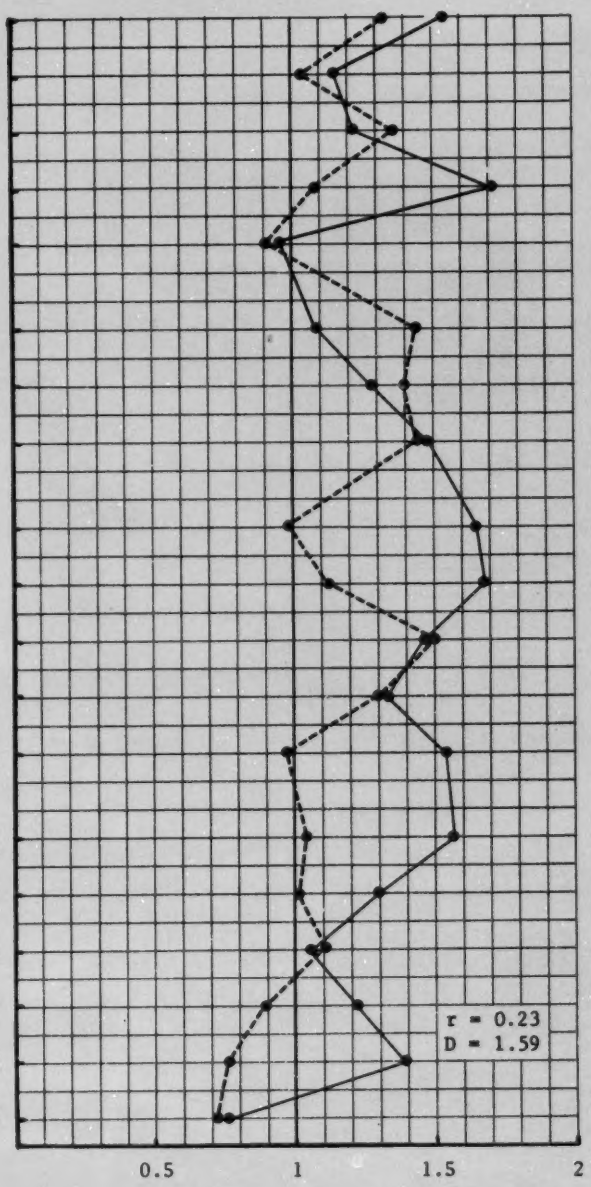

Figure 4.1 Profile Comparison of Teacher (———) and Student (------) Perceptions of the Ideal Curriculum in English Language

Comparing the profiles in terms of our four major categories, we note that there is reasonably close agreement between teachers and students on the ideal curriculum in writing with the exception of item 4, personal writing, which teachers see as warranting considerably greater emphasis in the writing curriculum than do students. This may come as something of a surprise to those who see personal writing as a means of making the curriculum more relevant to the needs and interests of students. Students see slightly more emphasis on formal essay writing and slightly less emphasis on narrative and report writing as desirable in the ideal curriculum than do teachers, but the discrepancies in each case are minor.

The only one of the four categories given greater overall prominence by students than by teachers in their perceptions of the ideal curriculum is mechanics, although this is mainly attributable to the greater importance attached by the students to grammar. This is somewhat surprising in view of the largely negative reactions to grammar exercises evident in the class interview data, suggesting that the high priority given to it in the student profile is an indication of perceived importance rather than intrinsic interest.

The area of greatest disagreement between students and teachers in the ideal curriculum is reading, for while there is quite close agreement on the level of emphasis which should be given to interest-based reading and remedial reading, there is almost a complete reversal of perceived priorities. While students give their highest priority in the ideal reading program to interest-based reading and remedial reading, and their lowest priority to intensive reading and reading comprehension, teachers give their highest priority to extensive and intensive reading, and their lowest priority to remedial reading. There are quite large discrepancies between the two groups in their perceptions of the idea level of emphasis on intensive reading and reading comprehension in particular, and, to a slightly lesser extent, on extensive reading.

There are considerable differences too between the two groups on the emphasis which should be given to oral language, although this appears to be more a question of overall emphasis than relative priorities, despite the close agreement on the appropriate level of emphasis on public speaking and language variety. The greatest discrepancies occur on the importance attached to listening comprehension and small group discussion.

The Operative Curriculum

There is much closer agreement between teachers and students in their perceptions of the operative curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school (Figure 4.2), as is evidenced by the high correlation ($r = 0.82$) and the comparatively small distance measure ($D = 1.07$) between the two profiles. This overall concurrence increases our confidence that the picture emerging from the data of current practices in English

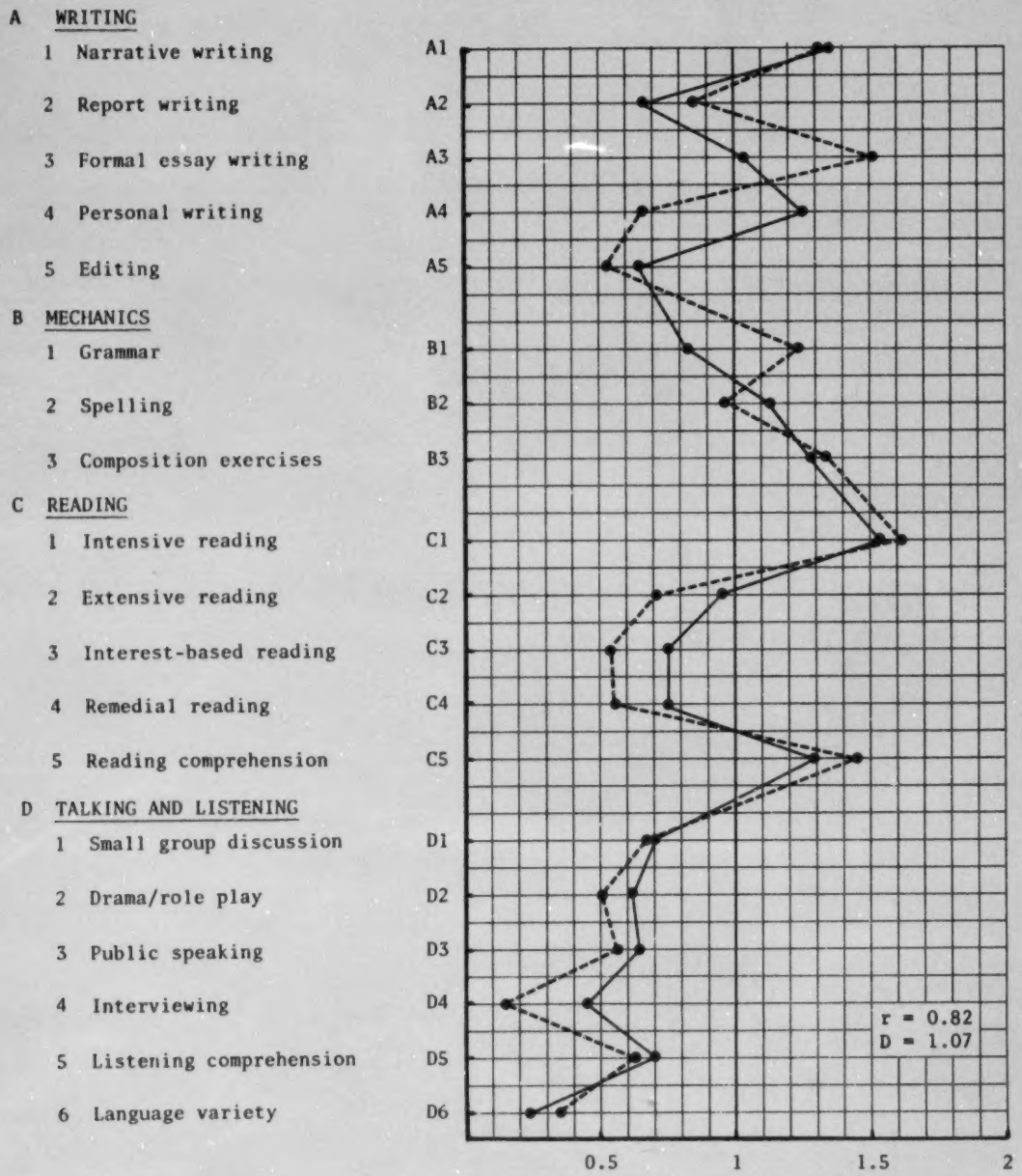

Figure 4.2 Profile Comparison of Teacher (———) and Student (------) Perceptions of the Operative Curriculum in English Language

language teaching is a reasonably accurate one, at least insofar as the case study schools are concerned; although we need to remember that the profiles represent highly aggregated data which disguise considerable variability in the perceptions of both groups.

The greatest discrepancies occur on the perceived emphasis given to personal writing, formal essay writing, and grammar. Students and teachers are most closely in agreement on the perceived emphasis given to small group discussion, narrative writing, and composition exercises, although several other items show quite high levels of agreement, in particular public speaking, listening comprehension, and intensive reading.

Comparing the profiles in terms of our four major categories, we note that it is the writing curriculum which produces the greatest disparity in the perceptions of students and teachers. While there is reasonable agreement on the relative emphasis given to narrative writing, report writing, and editing, there is a complete reversal in the perceived priorities placed on formal essay writing and personal writing. While students see formal essay writing as receiving the greatest emphasis in the writing curriculum, teachers see it as receiving only moderate emphasis; while teachers see personal writing as receiving a major emphasis, second only to narrative writing, students see it as receiving very little emphasis.

It is difficult to account for this reversal in perceived priorities, particularly given the general concurrence of perceptions in the profile as a whole. It is true that the term 'essay' is used rather broadly in the junior secondary school, and it is possible that students use it rather more loosely than do teachers, but this hardly seems an adequate explanation of the observed discrepancy. In any case, one would expect that if it were operating to any great extent it would show up in the perceived emphasis on narrative writing rather than in the perceived emphasis on personal writing. Certainly it is clear that students as a whole perceive school writing as more academic and more remote from their own thoughts, feelings, and interests than do their teachers; and this in itself provides cause for reflection.

Some disparity of perception occurs also in the mechanics category, although this is mainly focused on the relative importance attached to grammar, which students see as receiving rather more emphasis in the operative curriculum than their teachers do. While this again may be due to some differences in interpretation - students may attach a rather broader meaning to the term 'grammar' than their teachers do - one would expect this to be reflected in a corresponding difference in perceptions of the importance attached to composition exercises, which is clearly not the case. It would appear then that the discrepancy does reflect a genuine difference in perception rather than a difference of definition, although this may have played some part. It is also worth recalling that grammar was one of the items producing the greatest variability, especially between schools, for both teachers and students, and this may suggest some artificiality in the aggregated means.

The reading category provides the area of greatest agreement in teacher and student perceptions of the operative curriculum, in particular the marked similarity in the shape of the two profiles, with the student profile providing a slightly more accentuated version of the priorities revealed in the teacher profile. The items seen by both groups as receiving the greatest emphasis (intensive reading and reading comprehension) are seen by students as receiving slightly more emphasis than they are by teachers, while the items seen as receiving the least emphasis by both groups (interest-based reading, remedial reading, and extensive reading) are seen as receiving slightly less emphasis by students than they are by teachers. The picture emerging from both profiles clearly reflects the dominance of the traditional academic approach to literature in the reading program in the junior secondary school, reflecting in turn perhaps the downward pressure of external examinations in the senior school.

There is substantial agreement too in the picture emerging from the profile comparison of oral language as the poor relation in the junior secondary school English program, with students tending to see slightly less emphasis than teachers; although the only major discrepancy is in the amount of emphasis given to interviewing. Again there is general concurrence in the shape of the two profiles, with both groups agreeing that most emphasis in the oral language program is given to small group discussion and listening comprehension, and least to interviewing and language variety.

It would be inappropriate to end this comparative analysis of teacher and student perceptions of the operative curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school without some reference to between school differences, both as an important element in an overview of current practice and as a lead in to our investigation of style type differences in Part Two of this report. It will be recalled that in Chapters 2 and 3 use was made of the intraclass correlation coefficient as a descriptive indicator of between school differences in teacher and student perceptions of the operative curriculum. These statistics are compared in Table 4.2.

While it will be immediately clear from the table that between school differences are on the whole more marked in the perceptions of teachers than in the perceptions of students - in itself an interesting observation - there are important areas of agreement. The clearest difference between schools in the perceptions of both teachers and students is in the amount of emphasis given to grammar, with reasonably clear differences also evident in the amount of emphasis given to formal essay writing, intensive reading, and small group discussion. The evidence is less clear for between school differences in the amount of emphasis given to drama and role play and reading comprehension, but the clear differences in the perceptions of teachers do receive some support in the perceptions of students. The reverse pattern appears in the emphasis given to interest-based reading, with between school differences more evident in the perceptions of students, but with some support in the perceptions of teachers.

Table 4.2 Differences Between Schools in Teacher and Student Perceptions of the Operative Curriculum in English Language

Item		Intraclass Correlation Coefficients	
		Teachers	Students
A1	Narrative writing	-0.02	0.10
A2	Report writing	0.01	0.16
A3	Formal essay writing	0.30	0.27
A4	Personal writing	0.43	0.00
A5	Editing	0.00	0.06
B1	Grammar	0.55	0.51
B2	Spelling	0.18	0.13
B3	Composition exercises	0.63	0.10
C1	Intensive reading	0.37	0.37
C2	Extensive reading	0.11	0.38
C3	Interest-based reading	0.19	0.29
C4	Remedial reading	0.53	0.05
C5	Reading comprehension	0.45	0.18
D1	Small group discussion	0.57	0.32
D2	Drama/role-play	0.37	0.21
D3	Public speaking	0.42	0.01
D4	Interviewing	0.38	0.05
D5	Listening comprehension	0.24	0.02
D6	Language variety	0.11	0.01

While it is these areas of concurrence between teacher and student perceptions that are of most interest to us here, since they give us some grounds for confidence that the perceived differences are in fact real differences, there are a number of items on which between school differences are quite evident in the perception of teachers, but not in the perception of students, and one where the reverse pattern applies, suggesting some quite important differences in the teacher and student experiences of the curriculum. Of particular interest here are personal writing and composition exercises, the former because it keeps cropping up in the data, the latter because while it represents the largest between school difference in teacher perceptions that difference remains largely unperceived by students. As we shall see in our discussions of style type differences in Part Two of this report, there is some evidence to suggest that differences in teacher and student perceptions of the emphasis given to personal writing may be related to assessment procedures. Since personal writing is less likely to be assessed, it is perceived by students as less important and therefore as receiving less emphasis, quite independently of the amount of time devoted to it in the classroom. The discrepancy between teacher and student perceptions of between school differences in the emphasis given to composition exercises is less readily explained by the data, but the pervasiveness in most classrooms of textbooks containing such exercises suggests that

they might well play a greater part in the program-in-practice, at least in the student experience of that program, than some teachers would readily acknowledge.

Some General Conclusions

When we come to integrate into our analysis the insights derived from the interview data and the content analyses of curriculum documents it becomes more difficult to trace precise patterns of agreement and disagreement. Nevertheless it is true to say that these further sources of data broadly support the patterns emerging from the profile analyses and serve both to amplify and to supplement them; and that from the accumulated evidence from different data sources it is possible to build up a picture of current practice in English language curriculum in the junior secondary school that has general validity, at least insofar as the case study schools are concerned.

Prominent in this generalized picture are the boring nature of much of the work done in the English language classroom, and the uninspired and uninspiring nature of much school writing; the dominant role of the publishers of commercial textbooks in determining much of what is done in the English language classroom; the general uncertainty, even confusion, among many English teachers about what should be done to promote meaningful learning in the English language classroom; and the downward pressure of public examinations at the Year 12 level or the requirements of senior colleges on the English language curriculum in the junior secondary school, which no doubt goes some way towards explaining the predominantly academic emphasis we have noted in our profile comparisons.

Other themes which persistently recur in the data are the lack of any reference point in current linguistic theory and research; a concern with the mechanics of language which appears to be largely independent of the editing process; an almost exclusive focus on the structural elements of language; and a general neglect of oral language. If, as the linguists insist and commonsense would dictate, oral language is the primary mode of language development, its neglect in the junior secondary school curriculum may be more than simply a failure to accord it its due importance; it may also inhibit potential growth in the written mode.

Whatever way we choose to interpret these data, however, it is clear that, contrary to popular belief, traditional methods are alive, if not entirely well, in the English language curriculum in the junior secondary school. Whether we applaud this emphasis or deplore it, it is clear that if that other persistent popular belief that standards in English language are declining - a belief which, incidentally, has also been challenged by recent evidence (Bourke *et al.*, 1981) - is to continue to be held, it seems unlikely that it can be sheeted home to the widespread use of trendy new methods in English language teaching, or to a drift away from the so-called 'basics'.

Nor should these generalized observations be interpreted as an attack, either overt or implied, on English teachers. If there is one thing to be learned from a study such as this it is that English language curriculum is not a static thing to be observed and neatly defined, but a dynamic interplay of concerned people struggling to find workable solutions to seemingly intractable problems. As one of our leading philosophers has commented in a recent book on the philosophy of teaching:

> It is not my concern to allocate blame for this state of affairs and least of all to load it on the shoulders of the English teacher. Part of the trouble is that the deficiencies of our mass system of education are at their most obvious in such fields of the teaching of English. Nowhere is the need for individual tuition, fluidity in curriculum to suit the varying degrees of preparedness of different classes of children, the maintenance of freshness and enthusiasm amongst teachers, at once more necessary and more difficult to attain.
>
> Yet the English teacher often finds himself with an impossible burden of correction, with unusually large classes, and is at the same time called upon to undertake more than his fair share of extra-curricular activity. It is a not unreasonable view that the English teacher and the history teacher should have a lighter burden of formal responsibility than other teachers; the reverse is too often the case. In some education systems English teaching is thought of as something which anyone, however ill-prepared, can do. Nothing could be further from the truth. But, excuses and explanations apart, there is no use pretending that the teaching of English is, at present, even broadly successful. Perhaps greater clarity about what is precisely the English teacher's function may throw a little light on the reasons for that failure - even if, by itself, it does little or nothing to relieve it. (Passmore, 1980:236)

If this study does no more than contribute towards a better understanding of the dimensions of the problem and the resources needed to tackle it, it will have served a useful purpose.

PART TWO

CURRICULUM STYLE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Style is the perfection of a point of view.
- Richard Eberhardt

CHAPTER 5

STYLE AND THE CURRICULUM

The highly generalized overview and aggregated data which have characterized our analysis to date disguise considerable differences between teachers and between schools in their approach to the English language curriculum in the junior secondary school, and it is with these differences that we will be concerned in the second half of this report. As was noted in the introductory chapter, this study had its origins in an earlier study, *Curriculum Style and Social Learning* (Piper, 1979), which attempted to perform for the curriculum in social education an overview of current practice similar to that attempted in the present study for the curriculum in English language. An important outcome of that study was the development of a typology of curriculum style based on current practices in social education in the case study schools.

The study identified three basic curriculum styles: a Type I or expository style, with its focus on *content*; a Type II, or functional style, with its focus on *process*; and a Type III, or situational style, with its focus on the *context* in which the learning takes place. The concept of *style* itself derives from criticism in literature and the arts, where it functions as an analytical concept for the classification of the work, the artist, or the period. It is a ubiquitous and highly flexible concept. Thus, while style is essentially idiosyncratic, its idiosyncratic nature does not preclude broad classifications encompassing a high degree of generalization (classical, romantic, baroque). Style in this broader sense is defined by its focus rather than by the breadth of its vision or the range of its concerns; and in adopting the concept from criticism in literature and the arts the study also adopted this principle of definition by focus.

Focus, then, defines the style, but carries with it no implication of narrowness or exclusiveness, or of a lack of concern with other curriculum elements. Normally, of course, a curriculum will contain all three elements; and will almost certainly pay some attention to all of them. What distinguishes one style type from another is its selection of one of these elements to provide the principal focus around which the curriculum is organized.

While the evidence of the case study schools generally confirmed the viability of the basic typology as a means of classifying school programs in social learning, it was clear that there were marked differences between programs classified together under the same broad stylistic type; and that the typology, if it was to be useful beyond the immediate needs of the study, should take account of these within-style variations. Moreover, it became clear that the classification of school programs according to their basic style types had been principally concerned with certain structural components of the curriculum itself; with what could be termed its *formal* focus. In analysing school

Table 5.1 A Classification of Curriculum Styles in Social Education (adapted from Piper, 1979:92)

	Type a DEFINITIVE (discipline-focused)	Type b INTERACTIVE (society-focused)	Type c RESPONSIVE (student-focused)
Type I EXPOSITORY (content-focused)	*	*	*
Type II FUNCTIONAL (process-focused)	*	*	*
Type III SITUATIONAL (context-focused)	*	*	*

programs in social education it became clear that as well as this structural or formal focus there was also a focus concerned with the derivation or source of the curriculum, which could be termed its *generic* focus: a concern with elements lying outside itself which provided it with its justification and substance. Thus it was common for a curriculum or program to focus on a school 'subject' or academic 'discipline' and to take its justification and substance from the body of knowledge associated with that subject or discipline. Alternatively, a curriculum could focus on the 'real' world, deriving its justification and substance from elements of that real world such as the society or the environment. Yet again, a curriculum could take as its focus the learner, deriving its justification and substance from the needs and interests of the individual student or group of students.

It also became clear that this generic focus cut across the formal focus, providing another dimension within which curricula could be differentiated. These observations led to the development of an extended typology which postulated three further curriculum styles - a Type a, or definitive style, with its focus on the *subject* or the *discipline*; a Type b, or interactive style, with its focus on the *society*; and a Type c, or responsive style, with its focus on the *learner* - occurring *within* each of the basic style types. The extended typology thus identified nine specific style types classified according to both their formal, or structural, focus and their generic, or derivational, focus (Table 5.1).

As might be expected, it was not uncommon to find some mixture of styles, expecially where the unit of classification was the school's total program in social education. Some of these 'mixtures' occurred essentially within one of the basic style types; others occurred across the basic types, but within one of the generic types; while

others involved mixtures along both dimensions of the typology. One way of approaching the problems of classification created by these various mixtures was to set up extra categories in the typology to accommodate them. Another approach involved classifying programs in terms of the specific style types contributing to the 'mixture'. While this created difficulties in practice when dealing with the whole school as the unit of analysis, it had decided advantages in the classification of programs where the individual classroom was the unit of analysis.

The virtue of the typology as a means of classifying school programs in social education lies in its simplicity, its flexibility, and its grounding in the actual practice of the case study schools. Not surprisingly, as a result of the study, questions were raised about the usefulness of the typology as an analytical and classificatory device for areas of the curriculum other than social education, and investigating its applicability to the English language curriculum was an important consideration in the design of the present study.

Curriculum Style and English Language

It is tempting to begin our exploration of the applicability of the concept of curriculum style to the curriculum in English language with a consideration of the changing ideas about language and language learning discussed in Chapter 1. Certainly there are parallels to be drawn between shifting models of language and language learning over the past three decades and the style types as identified in the social education curriculum; and these are mirrored in the differences between the old-style and new-style curriculum documents as identified by Christie and Rothery. So, too, John Carr's three categories of textbooks/materials for English language study suggest tempting parallels with the three basic style types as we have outlined them above. In a recent paper on child language development Frances Christie has summarized the relevant linguistic research in a way which invites equally tempting comparisons:

> One such body of research which emanates from the United States has been developed by a group of psychologists and psycholinguists all more or less methodologically indebted to Chomsky, whose approach to linguistic study has tended to concentrate on the structure of language. A second area of research has been developed by Halliday whose linguistic theory is primarily concerned with language function. The third area has been developed by a group of sociolinguists mainly in the States whose interest is in examining language as a social phenomenon, as a manifestation of participation in social relationships and events. (Christie, 1979:23)

While such diversions are tempting, however, and would no doubt be interesting in the light they might shed on the conflicting pressures bearing down on the English language curriculum, the strength of the concept of curriculum style and the typology derived from it lies in their firm grounding in curriculum practice rather than in

curriculum theory. Moreover, one of the most immediately obvious features of most teachers' discussion of their practice in the taped interviews collected during the present study is the absence of any theoretical reference point; although we must take care not to overlook the unconscious ideological and epistemological assumptions which determine much of what teachers do and how they perceive what they do, and the complicated relationship these bear to the conflicting ideas and pressures impinging on their practice from outside. Before going on to our consideration of practice, however, there are a number of problems and issues related to the application of the typology to the English language area of the curriculum which it is important at this stage, if not to resolve, at least to raise.

The first of these problems concerns the boundaries of the study and involves a series of issues revolving around the initial difficulty that language is more than subject English, and subject English is more than language. This in turn involves a consideration of the role of literature in a study devoted to English language learning; the role of drama; and the role of what has come to be known as 'language across the curriculum'.

The first of these issues, the role of literature in the study, is a difficult one to resolve. English as a discipline has always been somewhat schizophrenic (Wilson, 1964; Bullock, 1975). While it has usually maintained that a relationship existed between its literature strand and its language strand, it has always been careful also to maintain a distinction between them; and while the newer English syllabuses and guidelines may have blurred this distinction with their increased emphasis on language, it is nevertheless clear that something of it still remains. A similar problem occurs with drama. Where it is seen as a separate subject in the curriculum (as distinct from a component in the literature strand of subject English) it seems to be taught in the main by teachers from the English department and to be perceived as an elective within that department; and while it is clearly relevant to language development, it is my impression that, at least in the case study schools, its principal focus is literary and/or theatrical. In practice it has been impossible to draw clear boundaries, as will have already been evident from the first part of this report; and while the study has tried to keep its focus on language learning, it has been necessary at times to accept the fact that in curriculum research clear distinctions are not always possible.

A somewhat different problem is posed by 'language across the curriculum'. An important part of the thrust of the new ideas on language and language learning impinging on the school curriculum has revolved around the role of language in learning, across all subjects, not simply reviving the much earlier dictum that 'every teacher is a teacher of English' but adding the perhaps more important insight that every teacher is a teacher *in* English. Clearly this is a thrust that the study could not afford to ignore; but clearly too the extent to which it has been possible to take it into account has been limited by the resources available. In practice the study has focused its attention

principally on teachers of subject English less by design than by necessity; although where schools have had a 'language across the curriculum' policy in operation this has been an important target of the investigation. Such instances however are regrettably rare; perhaps surprisingly so given the currency the concept has had in educational thinking over the past decade or more.

Another set of problems is raised by the terminology used in the typology to identify style types. While it seemed at the time of writing up the earlier study that terms like 'interactive functional' communicated the essence of the style type more effectively than the rather clinical 'Type II b', it has become apparent in subsequent discussion that many of the terms chosen to 'name' the style types have different connotations for different people, and in some cases have acted as a barrier to communication. Given this experience, plus the fact that terms like 'functional' and 'situational' have special linguistic connotations not altogether compatible with their intended meanings in the typology, it seems wise for the time being at least to abandon the terminology and to rely on the numerical and alphabetical classifications as defined by focus.

These however are largely operational problems, matters of procedure rather than conceptualization. More important are a series of issues arising from the nature of English language learning, and in particular from an important distinction to be drawn between the nature of English language as a subject of study, and the nature of the subjects commonly found in the social area of the curriculum, which provided the basis on which the typology of curriculum style was developed.

The latter have traditionally been defined in terms of a body of content (the French Revolution, Urbanization, Unemployment), which implies a body of knowledge to be acquired, whereas English language has traditionally been defined in terms of processes (sentence construction, paragraphing) which imply a set of skills to be acquired or developed. Thus while it was relatively straightforward in the social area of the curriculum to distinguish between style types on the basis of the relative emphasis placed on the acquisition of knowledge (how much history has the student learned?) and on the development of skills (how well has the student developed the skills of the historian?) it would appear to be a good deal more difficult to apply such a distinction to the English language curriculum.

While the problem may well be more semantic than conceptual, it requires a good deal more teasing out of our definitions of style type than appeared to be necessary in the earlier study, and in particular a good deal clearer understanding of what we mean by 'content' and what we mean by 'process'; and, for that matter, what we mean by 'skills'. Is there, for example, a way of viewing skills as content which is different, in some substantive way, from a way of viewing skills as process? Certainly some such distinction would seem to be implied in some of the newer English curriculum

documents. In their analysis of the New South Wales curriculum documents, for example, Christie and Rothery refer to

> a conception of English, not as a body of knowledge, but as a set of language skills - talking, listening, reading, and writing. (Christie and Rothery, 1979:219)

and, a little later, to

> an emphasis on English as active pursuit or process, so that developing competence is to be measured in ability to do things (e.g. 'ability to write to a purpose', or 'ability to read efficiently') (*op. cit.*:221)

This would not seem to be too far removed from the distinction Bruner draws in relation to the curriculum in science:

> The schoolboy learning physics *is* a physicist, and it is easier for him to learn physics behaving like a physicist than doing something else. The 'something else' usually involves the task of mastering what came to be called at Woods Hole a 'middle language' - classroom discussions and textbooks that talk about the conclusions in a field of intellectual inquiry rather than centering upon the inquiry itself. (Bruner, 1960:14)

and, elsewhere, more generally

> In none of what we have described thus far is there anything like memorization or performing a particular repertory . . . Rather, what seems to be at work in a good problem-solving 'performance' is some underlying competence in using the operations of physics or whatever, and the performance that emerges from this competence may never be the same on any two occasions. What is learnt is competence, not particular performances. (Bruner, 1974:126-7)

The reference to inquiry raises another interesting point in relation to style type differences in social education. The process of inquiry is not only a process to be learned (the inquiry method); it is also a process of learning, a process whereby knowledge is acquired; and moreover, so the argument goes, the knowledge gained through inquiry is both more meaningful and more memorable because it has been generated by the student rather than by the teacher. The distinction between a Type I, or content-focused, style and a Type II, or process-focused, style is thus not so much in the importance they attach to knowledge as an outcome of learning as in the way in which that knowledge is acquired.

This suggests that in looking for style type differences we might do well to look closely at assumptions about the nature of learning, as well as at the more overt realizations of these assumptions in curriculum practice. To put it another way, the crucial distinction may be not so much the traditional one between process and product, as between a view of learning which distinguishes between the two and a view of learning which sees them as indistinguishable. Perhaps it is a similar point that Christie and Rothery are making when they comment, in their critique of the new wave of English curriculum documents, that

> It is a possible measure of uncertainty about directions in English teaching that the two terms 'skill' and 'art' are used variously, sometimes within the same State. It is surely important to clarify whether we do see our language activities as concerned with skills or arts, for the implications for our own teaching practices are considerable. The one implies some kind of expertise to be acquired and practised, the other suggests the development of inner capacities or potential. (Christie and Rothery, 1979:203)

What then are the implications of this for the problem with which we started, the applicability of the basic typology to the English language curriculum? What might be meant by a view of language as 'content'? To start with, it might adopt a structural view of language, and see language learning principally in terms of the mastery of structures and the rules governing those structures. In linguistic terms, it might be a good deal more concerned with the syntactic aspects of language than with the semantic aspects. This is not to suggest that the semantic aspects would be ignored, but rather that they would be subordinated to the principal task of mastering the mechanics of language. John Carr's analysis of the view of language underlying the traditional language skills textbook quoted in Chapter 1 might be seen as exemplifying a view of language as 'content'.

A view of language as 'process', on the other hand, might adopt an operational view of language, and see language learning principally in terms of meaning and purpose. In linguistic terms, it might be a good deal more concerned with the semantic aspects of language than with the syntactic aspects. Again this is not to suggest that syntactic/structural elements would be ignored, but rather that they would be subordinated to the principal task of meaning-making; that they would be seen as means to an end, rather than as ends in themselves. James Britton might be seen as exemplifying a view of language as 'process' when he writes:

> Putting this at its simplest, what children use language for in school must be 'operations' and not 'dummy runs'. They must continue to use it to make sense of the world: they must *practise* language in the sense in which a doctor 'practises' medicine and a lawyer 'practises' law, and *not* in the sense in which a juggler 'practises' a new trick before he performs it. This way of working does not make difficult things easy: what it does is make them worth the struggle. It is, of course, subject to a good deal of criticism: it has been called 'language learning by osmosis', or 'learning by soaking' and the like. Teachers need to defend themselves against such criticism in two ways: in theory, by insisting that learning is an evolutionary process in which the fullest possible development at any stage is the best preparation for ensuing stages; and in practice . . . by ensuring as far as they can that the operations undertaken by their pupils offer genuine challenges, and result in the extension and deepening of their experience. (Britton, 1970:130)

It is of course possible to view language as having both structure and process and to move systematically, or more likely somewhat uneasily, between the two, and there is evidence from the data already presented that a good many teachers find themselves, consciously or unconsciously, in this position. It is evident too that for many of them

this creates a tension in their practice, a tension which they frequently fail to resolve to their own satisfaction.

Where, then does this leave us in relation to the typology of curriculum style and its applicability to the curriculum in English language? While it would be premature to leap in too hastily on the basis of the purely theoretical exploration undertaken so far, there is at least some *prima facie* evidence to suggest that the typology could provide a viable means of classifying curricula in English language education and a useful device for analysing them. The reader will no doubt have noted that our analysis to date has said nothing of the Type III, or context-focused, style. Is there a view of language as 'context', or more sensibly language 'in context', which is different in some substantive way to the two views identified above? We will put aside this question for the moment, but return to it later in the chapter. First we will take a detailed look at the language programs in subject English of two schools which have been classified on the basis of the study as exhibiting a Type I and Type II style respectively. It should be emphasized that these classifications are based on actual practices in the case study schools themselves, not on the more theoretical positions explored above; and it is on its applicability to actual practice that the viability of the typology as a device for classifying curricula in English language must stand or fall.

Language as Content: A Type I Style (Case Study 1)

Our first case study is the language program in subject English in a relatively new (opened 1973) high school in Melbourne's expanding outer eastern suburbs. The area from which the school draws its students is predominantly upper working class/lower middle class, and the school has a substantial number of students from migrant backgrounds. The language program in subject English has two basic aims: firstly to ensure the acquisition of basic literacy skills by all students, and secondly to 'extend the student beyond basic literacy skills and develop more abstract skills.'

> The balance between these two types of aims will alter according to the level at which the subject is being taught. In years 7 and 8 the emphasis should be on the acquisition of basic skills with some extension beyond these. Extension of basic skills should receive progressive emphasis in years 9 and 10 and become almost the entire focus by years 11 and 12.

A remedial withdrawal program in Years 7 and 8 assists in the achievement of these objectives.

The 'core activities' to be pursued in achieving these aims in Years 7 to 10 are, in summary:

- creative writing ('a big emphasis on this')
- word exercises: spelling, vocabulary building
- grammar exercises 'aimed at giving each child mastery of specified grammar

- again a big emphasis on this'
- comprehension exercises
- a study in detail of the set novels

While there are clearly differences in the way these requirements are interpreted by different teachers, it does appear that they are largely followed by the English department, although not without some doubts. The school is highly conscious of the performance of its students at the external Higher School Certificate examination in Year 12 and, despite the fact that only about 20 per cent of students actually go on to attempt this hurdle, much of what is done in the junior secondary curriculum reflects this concern. Teachers see it as a major responsibility of the junior secondary school to ensure that those who do go on are properly equipped to do so, and they are aware that both parents and the wider community will judge their performance largely on this criterion.

Language as Process: A Type II Style (Case Study 2)

Our second case study is the language program in subject English in a high school in the southern suburbs of Canberra. The school draws its students from a wide socio-economic spectrum and, as with other high schools in the Australian Capital Territory, caters for students in school Years 7 to 10, with students moving on to separate senior colleges for Years 11 and 12. The language program in subject English in our Type II case study school has evolved over a number of years in an effort to provide a curriculum more genuinely appropriate to the varied needs and interests of the students than was seen to be offered by more traditional approaches, and it is still evolving, partly as a result of ongoing evaluation of program elements by both students and staff, partly as a result of changes of staff, bringing with them new perspectives, new ideas, and new areas of interest.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the program is its organization into semester units offering a variety of course options. Students choose one from among six or seven units offered each semester, each taken by a different member of the English faculty. While there is some counselling of students on their selection of appropriate units, there is no compulsion. Course units are framed partly on the basis of identified needs, partly on particular staff interests, and are organized around themes (e.g. *Alive!*; *Discovering the Australian Character*), genre (e.g. *Science Fiction*; *Poetry of Popular Music*), identified needs (e.g. *Everyday English*; *Developing Confidence in English*), or learning preferences (e.g. *Widening Your Horizons*; *Digging Deeper*; both of which offer a more traditional English literature curriculum).

While the major emphasis in the program is clearly on providing for a diversity of needs and interests, continuity is provided by a shared emphasis on the four language 'skills' of reading, writing, listening, and speaking ('whatever choice they make they're

still having basic English'); a belief in language development as an active pursuit, learned in use; and certain common elements, the most important of which are journal writing, planned assignments, and the reading period. A part of each 75 minute period - usually the first 10 or 15 minutes - is set aside for student writing in their private journal. While this writing may be shared with the teacher, with parents, or with peers, there is no compulsion to do so. Apart from checking that the writing is being done, teachers do not read or assess the writing in the journal unless invited to do so by the student. Each student is also expected to prepare two or three major assignments per semester, usually on a novel or collection of short stories. Common assignment sheets providing for both individual and group work have been prepared for each year level, although the individual teacher is at liberty to substitute or vary these as he/she sees fit. Usually one period per week is set aside as a private reading period, usually given over to reading related to the semester unit but sometimes used to encourage interest-based reading.

While the school is not subject to the downward pressure of an external examination, teachers are conscious of the expectations of the senior colleges and concerned about the performance of those of their students who move on to them. Assessment procedures associated with the award of a school certificate at the Year 10 level, although school-based, are also seen by some teachers as hampering the proper implementation of the program in Year 10.

Do We Have a Type III Style?

To date we have said little of the third basic style type identified in the earlier study: a Type III, or context-focused style. Context of course has always had a part in English language study. Thematic approaches are in part at attempt to provide a meaningful context for language learning, and literature has long provided a context for language study even in traditional programs; although it is worth noting that some more recent approaches have taken the idea of language in the context of literature a good deal further. In all of these programs however context seems more related to the source of the material used in language learning than to the way in which the learning takes place. It provides an element in the total program rather than the focus for the program. Typically the major focus of such programs is likely to be the content or the process of the learning, or perhaps a mixture of the two. We return to the question raised earlier in our discussion: Is there a view of language as 'context', or more sensibly language 'in context', which is different in some substantive way to the two views already identified? Two programs from the case study schools deserve serious consideration as candidates for such a classification.

1 Language Across the Curriculum (Case Study 3)

Language across the curriculum is an obvious dandidate for consideration as a context-focused program; and while it seems to be more enshrined in policy than in practice in most schools, we do have a case study school that has made considerable efforts to translate policy into action.

Our third case study is a large high school in Sydney's western suburbs. It is situated in a predominantly working-class area, and a sizeable proportion of its students are from migrant backgrounds. The school has a number of interesting language programs in operation, but for the moment we are concerned with its efforts to implement a language across the curriculum policy. The program is directed by a broadly-based committee chaired by a member of the science faculty, which may in part account for its acceptance. The committee puts out a monthly Language Bulletin which, as well as providing summary discussion of issues related to the role of language in learning across the curriculum, highlights a 'language objective for the month'. While the committee members are the first to admit that their success has been limited, they believe they are making some headway.

2 Language in a Multicultural Context (Case Study 4)

Our fourth case study is a medium-sized high school in Sydney's inner city area. It is situated in a working class area, with a very large intake of students from migrant backgrounds (in the words of a recent school magazine, 'try to spot the Aussie'). The school runs language programs in subject English, English as a Second Language, Initial Migrant English and Remedial Reading, and has initiated a reading-across-the curriculum program with varying degrees of success across the subject departments. Of particular interest here is the school's efforts to integrate these programs to permit maximum flexibility in catering for the individual needs of students, and in particular the development of parallel courses in subject English and English as a Second Language to allow flexibility of movement from one to the other, demonstrating a degree of co-operation and hard-won consensus that would appear to be relatively rare.

Clearly both of these programs have a claim for consideration as a context-focused style. Certainly the Language Across the Curriculum program of Case Study 3 is context-related; and the multi-strand language program of Case Study 4 is certainly context-sensitive. But is this the same thing as saying they are context-focused? Should we perhaps be seeing the focus of the Language Across the Curriculum program less as a concern with the context of the disciplines and more as a concern with the role of language in learning, seeing it perhaps more appropriately as a specific style type within

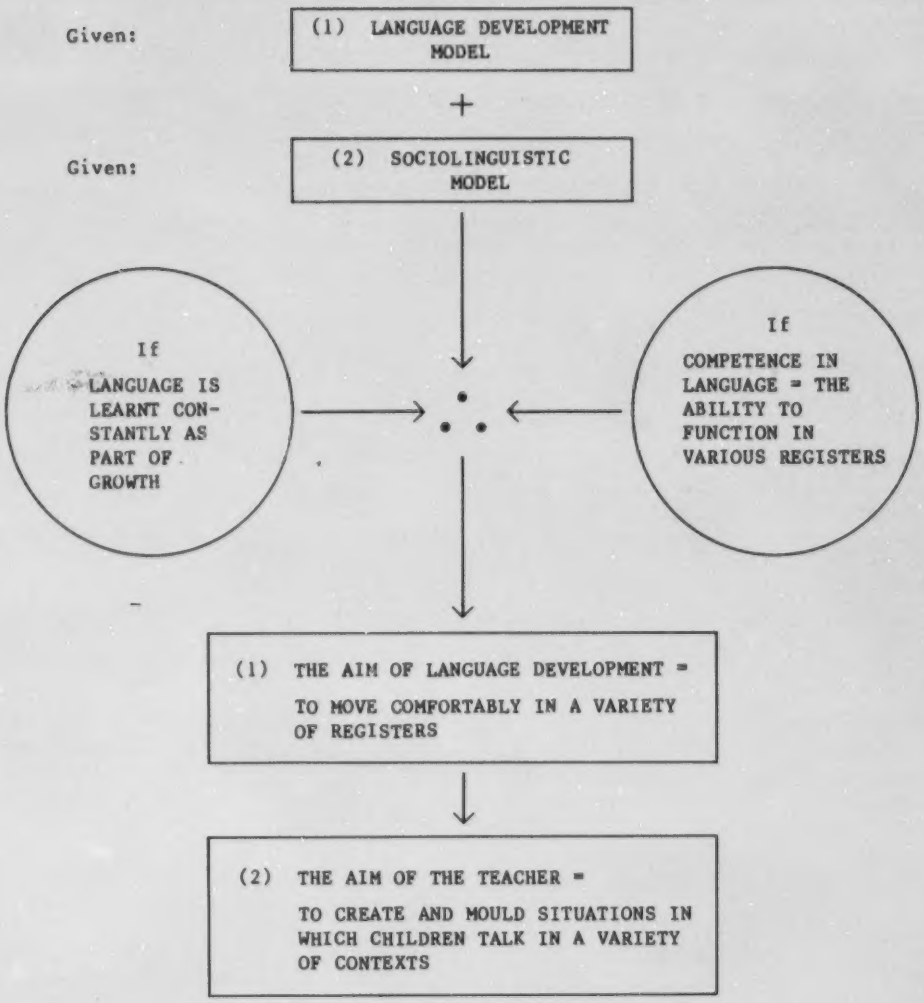
Given:
(1) LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT MODEL
+
Given:
(2) SOCIOLINGUISTIC MODEL
If
LANGUAGE IS LEARNT CONSTANTLY AS PART OF GROWTH
If
COMPETENCE IN LANGUAGE = THE ABILITY TO FUNCTION IN VARIOUS REGISTERS
(1) THE AIM OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT =
TO MOVE COMFORTABLY IN A VARIETY OF REGISTERS
(2) THE AIM OF THE TEACHER =
TO CREATE AND MOULD SITUATIONS IN WHICH CHILDREN TALK IN A VARIETY OF CONTEXTS

Figure 5.1 Diagrammatic Summary of the CDC/ACT Language Development Project's Model of Language Learning (Flynn and Savage, 1980a:3)

the broad category of Type II, or process-focused styles? Should we perhaps be seeing it as a program at all, in its own right, rather than as a language policy related to a variety of programs in which it is differentially implemented? Similarly with the multi-strand language program of Case Study 4. Is its sensitivity to context more appropriately seen as a response to student needs, and should we perhaps be more concerned with the specific style characteristics of the component programs? Such an approach would lead to a mixed style classification, and it is difficult to escape the conclusion that such a classification would be more appropriate.

We return to our earlier question: Is there a view of language as 'context', or language 'in context', which is different in some substantive way to the two views already identified and would justify classification as a distinctive style type? So far as the schools included in the present study are concerned, our answer to this question must remain unresolved. Luckily however we do have another source of data to which we can turn in our quest for an answer, namely the Curriculum Development Centre's Language Development Project, briefly described in Chapter 1. Our next case study summary moves outside the schools involved in the study to look briefly at one of the eight projects which go to make up the national Language Development Project.

The CDC/ACT Language Development Project (Case Study 5)

The CDC/ACT Language Development Project is concerned with the promotion of children's oral language capacities in school Years 5 to 8. By combining a set of concepts derived from socio-linguistic theory with the view of language and language learning emanating from Phase I of the Language Development Project, the CDC/ACT team has developed a model of oral language learning which has guided its experimental and developmental work in schools. The central feature of this model is a view of language development which sees language as a part of growth, learned in interaction with others; language competence as the ability to use language in a variety of contexts for a variety of purposes; and successful language teaching as the provision of creative learning situations in which children can use language in a variety of contexts for a variety of purposes. This model is summarized in Figure 5.1.

Of particular importance to our purposes here is the strong emphasis the model places on social interaction:

> The view of child language development suggests that language is learned in interaction with others to serve important needs - social needs, personal needs, learning needs. (Flynn and Savage, 1980a:2)

and on context:

> Using language successfully involves effective use of language in relation to different contexts and purposes. That is, it involves responding to the demands and needs of a given context by using language appropriate to the context. (*loc. cit.*)

The implications of this for practice are that

> The teacher's role is (i) to understand the nature of language variety and (ii) in the light of that knowledge to create a variety of situations through which to foster talking and listening (*op. cit.*:3)

These emphases would suggest that in the CDC/ACT Language Development Project we have a view of language which, while it owes a good deal to the growth model, differs from it in a substantive way, and that difference lies principally in the central role it gives to context. Context is of course an important concern of the growth model. What the CDC/ACT Language Development Project model has done is to shift it to centre stage; and if it is recalled that our definition of style type is based on *focus* rather than on the range or number of component elements, we are I believe justified in answering our question in the affirmative. Yes, we do have a Type III, or context-focused, style, at least in theory; and while that style may not yet be widespread in school practice, it does have its reflection in the practice of the project's teacher network, as will be demonstrated in the profile comparisons to be examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

STYLE TYPE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

In the previous chapter we identified three programs as exemplifying basic style type differences in their approach to the English language curriculum in the junior secondary school: the language program in subject English in Case Study School 1, which was identified as exemplifying a Type I, or content-focused, style; the language program in subject English in Case Study School 2, which was identified as exemplifying a Type II, or process-focused style; and the CDC/ACT Language Development Project, which was identified as exemplifying a Type III, or context-focused, style. In this chapter we will be comparing teacher and student perceptions of curriculum emphases in these three programs for the light they may throw on style type characteristics and the appropriateness of the typology as a device for classifying English language curricula.

It would of course be foolish to generalize on the basis of individual case studies, particularly since some elements of the program in any school - indeed any classroom - are bound to be idiosyncratic. Nevertheless, it is worth emphasizing that the case studies selected to exemplify style types were chosen only after the exploratory investigation of the programs in English language in 25 case study schools spread across three States and Territories, and the detailed investigation of the programs in eight of these schools, and can therefore lay some claim to representing typical program emphases in current practice. What we are seeking in this chapter is not generalizations, but working hypotheses based on a good deal of investigation and evidence related to practice in the case study schools. Provided this is kept in mind, there is much to be learned from a closer inspection of style type differences as they are exemplified in our case study programs.

The Basic Styles

The relevant data on profile comparisons of perceptions of curriculum emphases in the ideal, the planned, and the operative curriculum in our three sample programs are summarized in Table 6.1. It is clear from these data that style type differences are perceived by both teachers and students, and are evident in perceptions of the ideal curriculum as well as in perceptions of the planned and the operative curriculum, suggesting that such differences are more than just differences in practice, and involve differing perceptions of goals and values also.

Curiously, student differences are more apparent in perceptions of the ideal curriculum than in perceptions of the operative curriculum, at least in relative emphasis ($r = 0.18$, $r = 0.50$ respectively), although not in level of emphasis ($D = 1.97$, $D = 2.28$

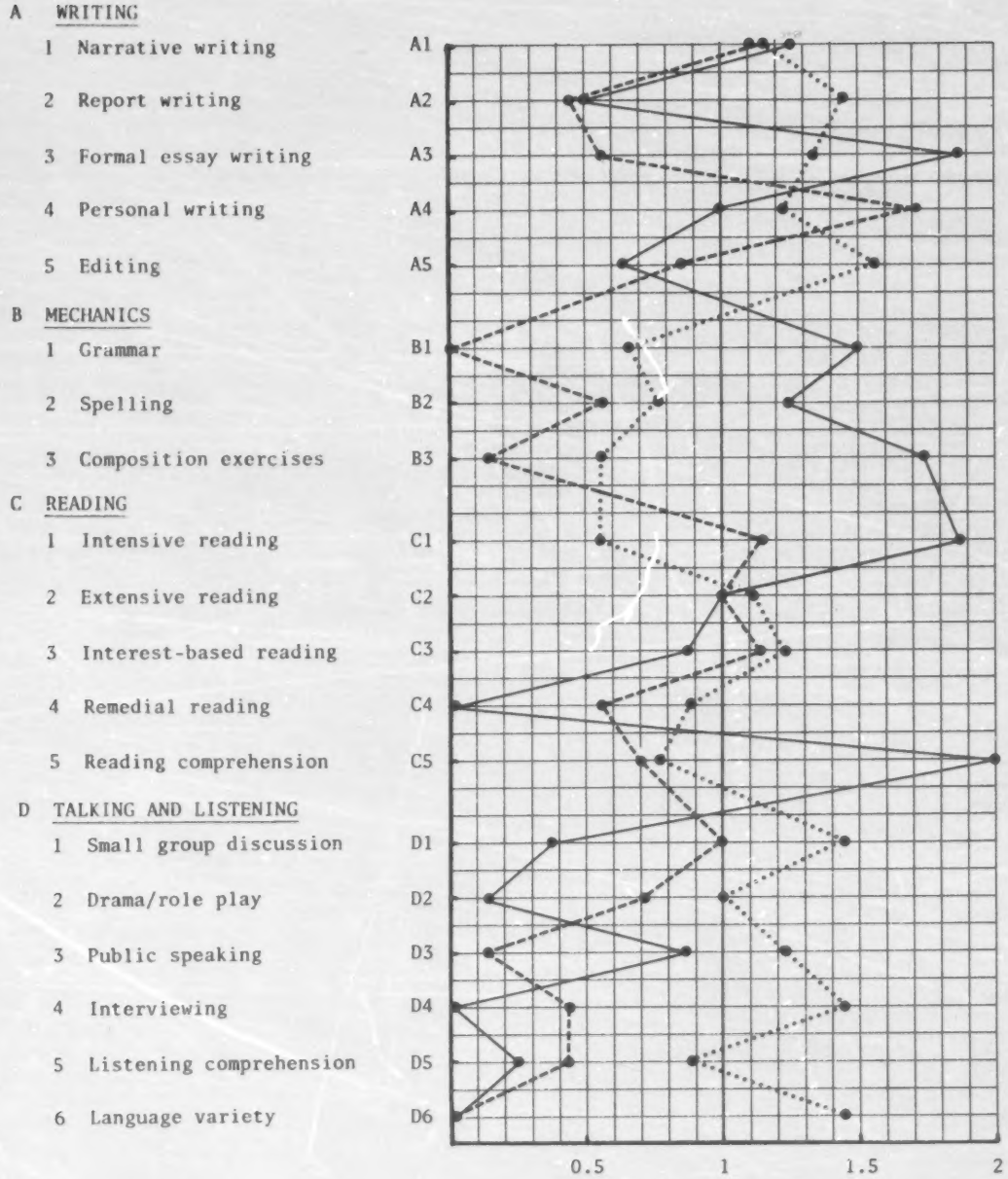

Figure 6.1 Profile Comparison of Teacher Perceptions of the Operative Curriculum in Three English Language Programs Identified as Exemplifying a Type I (———), Type II (------), and Type III (·····) Style Respectively (N = 8; N = 7; N = 9 respectively)

Table 6.1 Summary of Profile Comparison Data for Three English Language Programs Identified as Exemplifying Basic Style Type Differences

	r =			D =		
	I/II	I/III	II/III	I/II	I/III	II/III
Teachers Ideal	0.17	-0.55	0.25	3.06	3.60	2.26
Students Ideal	0.18	-	-	1.97	-	-
Teachers Planned	0.10	-0.61	0.17	3.47	3.75	2.71
Teachers Operative	0.13	-0.54	0.12	3.41	3.74	2.84
Students Operative	0.50	-	-	2.28	-	-

respectively). Teacher differences, on the other hand, are more apparent in the planned and the operative curriculum than the ideal, which is more in line with what we might expect, at least on the basis of the earlier study (Piper, 1979:70), although not markedly so. As we have argued previously, however, it is differences in perceptions of the operative curriculum that are of most relevance to a concept of curriculum style based on actual practice, and it is on these differences that we will be focusing our attention in this chapter, beginning with the perceptions of teachers in our three case study programs (Figure 6.1).

Teachers of subject English in Case Study School 1, represented in Figure 6.1 by the unbroken line and identified as exemplifying a Type I, or content-focused, style, see their operative language program as placing its greatest emphasis on reading comprehension, intensive reading, formal essay writing, composition exercises, and, to a slightly lesser extent, grammar, with little or no emphasis on remedial reading, interviewing, language variety, and drama and role-play, and only minor emphasis on small group discussion and listening comprehension. The writing program gives its major emphasis quite clearly to formal essay writing, with some emphasis on narrative writing and personal writing, and least emphasis on report writing and editing. Mechanics play an important part in the program-in-practice, particularly composition exercises and grammar. The reading program has a heavy emphasis on reading comprehension and the intensive reading of set books, with some emphasis on extensive and interest-based reading, and little or no emphasis on remedial reading. The program in oral language gives some emphasis to public speaking, relatively minor emphasis to small group discussion and listening comprehension, and little or no emphasis to drama and role-play, interviewing, or language variety.

The language program in subject English in Case Study School 2, represented in Figure 6.1 by the broken line and identified as exemplifying a Type II, or process-focused, style, is clearly seen by its teachers as placing its greatest emphasis on personal writing, with some emphasis on narrative writing, editing, intensive, extensive, and interest-based reading, and small group discussion, and little or no emphasis on

grammar, composition exercises, public speaking, and language variety. The writing program gives its major emphasis quite clearly to personal writing, with some emphasis on narrative writing and editing, and least emphasis on report writing and formal essay writing. Mechanics play the least important role of our four categories in the operative curriculum as it is perceived by our Type II case study teachers, with grammar and composition exercises receiving little or no emphasis, and spelling only minor emphasis. The reading program gives its major emphasis to intensive reading and interest-based reading, with slightly less emphasis on extensive reading and least on remedial reading and reading comprehension. The program in oral language gives some emphasis to small group discussion and somewhat less to drama and role-play, with little or no emphasis on public speaking and language variety, and only minor emphasis on interviewing and listening comprehension.

The ACT/LDP teachers, represented in Figure 6.1 by the dotted line and identified as exemplifying a Type III, or context-focused, style, see editing, report writing, small group discussion, interviewing, and language variety as receiving most emphasis in their program-in-practice. They see the mechanics of language, particularly composition exercises, intensive reading, and reading comprehension as receiving the least emphasis. Their operative curriculum in writing places its major emphasis on editing and report writing, with formal essay writing, personal writing, and narrative writing all receiving some emphasis. Mechanics receive the least overall emphasis of any of our four categories, with composition exercises receiving the least emphasis. The reading program is seen as emphasizing interest-based reading and extensive reading, with some emphasis on remedial reading and least on intensive reading and reading comprehension. Oral language is strongly emphasized, with small group discussion, interviewing, and language variety receiving the strongest emphasis, and listening comprehension and drama and role-play the least, although both are seen as receiving some emphasis in the program-in-practice.

It is clear that there are marked differences in teacher perceptions of the operative language programs in subject English in our two case study schools both in relative emphasis and in level of emphasis, as indicated by the low correlation coefficient ($r = 0.13$) and the very large distance measure ($D = 3.41$). Differences between the two school profiles are most marked in the comparative emphasis given to formal essay writing, the mechanics of language, in particular grammar and comprehension exercises, and reading comprehension. There are also clear differences, although not quite so marked, in the comparative emphasis given to personal writing, intensive reading, remedial reading, small group discussion, drama and role-play, and public speaking. The comparison suggests that a Type I style is most readily distinguished from a Type II style by its greater emphasis on formal essay writing, mechanics, intensive reading, reading comprehension, and public speaking; and its lesser

emphasis on personal writing, remedial reading, small group discussion, and drama and role-play.

When we come to compare perceptions of the operative curriculum in English language of teachers attached to the CDC/ACT Language Development Project with those of teachers in Case Study School 1, it will be immediately obvious that perceived differences are considerably greater than they were for our Type I/Type II comparison, both in relative emphasis and in level of emphasis, as indicated by the negative correlation ($r = -0.54$) and the very large distance measure ($D = 3.74$). Differences between the two profiles are most marked in the comparative emphasis given to report writing, editing, grammar, composition exercises, intensive reading, remedial reading, reading comprehension, and oral language in general, particularly small group discussion, drama and role-play, interviewing, and language variety. There are also clear differences, although not so marked, in the comparative emphasis given to formal essay writing, spelling, and interest-based reading. The comparison suggests that a Type I style is most readily distinguished from a Type III style by its greater emphasis on formal essay writing, the mechanics of language, intensive reading, and reading comprehension; and its lesser emphasis on report writing, editing, interest-based reading, remedial reading, and oral language in general, particularly small group discussion, interviewing, and language variety.

When perceptions of the operative curriculum in English language of teachers attached to the CDC/ACT Language Development Project are compared with those of teachers from Case Study School 2, the differences between the two profiles, while not so marked as they were in our Type I/Type III comparison, are nevertheless clearly evident, as indicated by the low correlation ($r = 0.12$) and relatively large distance measure ($D = 2.84$). Differences are most marked in the comparative emphasis given to report writing, editing, grammar, intensive reading, public speaking, interviewing, and language variety. There are also clear differences, although not so marked, in the comparative emphasis given to personal writing, composition exercises, small group discussion, and listening comprehension. This comparison suggests that a Type II style is most readily distinguished from a Type III style by its greater emphasis on personal writing and intensive reading; and its lesser emphasis on report writing, formal essay writing, editing, grammar and composition exercises, and oral language in general, particularly public speaking, interviewing, and language variety.

When we turn to student perceptions of the operative curriculum in English language (Figure 6.2) we are unfortunately limited to programs in our two case study schools, since it was not possible to obtain student perceptions of programs taught by our ACT/LDP teacher sample. Our style type comparison from the student perspective is therefore limited to a comparison between a Type I, or content-focused, style an a Type II, or process-focused, style.

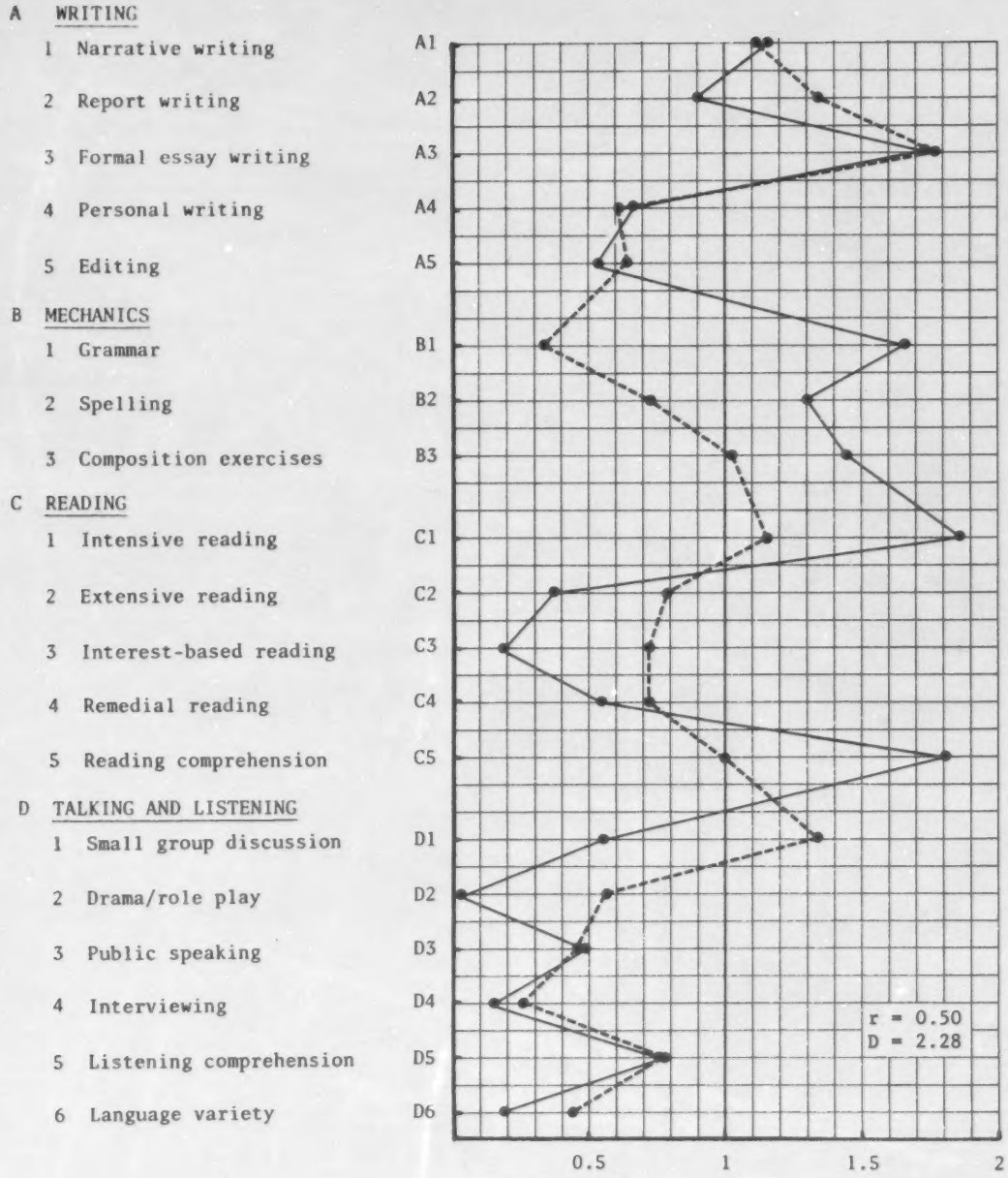

Figure 6.2 Profile Comparison of Student Perceptions of the Operative Curriculum in Two English Language Programs Identified as Exemplifying a Type I (———) and Type II (------) Style Respectively (N = 51; N = 54 respectively)

Student perceptions of the operative curriculum in English language in Case Study School 1, represented in Figure 6.2 by the unbroken line and identified as exemplifying a Type I, or content-focused, style reflect similar emphases to those perceived by their teachers. Students see the major emphasis in the program-in-practice as being on intensive reading, reading comprehension, formal essay writing, and grammar. Least emphasis is perceived as being given to drama and role-play, interviewing, interest-based reading, and language variety. They see the writing program as emphasizing formal essay writing, with some emphasis on narrative and report writing, and least emphasis on personal writing and editing. Mechanics are seen as strongly emphasized, with most emphasis on grammar. The reading program is perceived as strongly focused on intensive reading and reading comprehension, with little or no emphasis on extensive reading and interest-based reading, and only minor emphasis on remedial reading. Oral language is seen as receiving relatively little overall emphasis, with minor emphasis on listening comprehension, small group discussion, and public speaking, but little or no emphasis on drama and role-play, interviewing, or language variety.

Student perceptions of the operative curriculum in English language in Case Study School 2, represented in Figure 6.2 by the broken line and identified as exemplifying a Type II, or process-focused, style, differ in some important respects from those of their teachers.

Students see the major emphases of the operative curriculum as being on formal essay writing, report writing, and small group discussion, with some emphasis on narrative writing, composition exercises, intensive reading, extensive reading, and reading comprehension. Least emphasis is perceived as being given to grammar, public speaking, interviewing, and language variety. Students see the writing program as emphasizing formal essay writing and report writing, with some emphasis on narrative writing, and least emphasis on personal writing and editing. They see the mechanics of writing as receiving relatively minor attention in the program, with some emphasis on composition exercises, somewhat less on spelling, and relatively little on grammar. The reading program is perceived by students as placing its strongest emphasis on intensive reading, with some emphasis on reading comprehension and extensive reading and somewhat less on interest-based reading and remedial reading. Oral language is seen as receiving relatively little emphasis with the exception of small group discussion, with interviewing, public speaking, and language variety receiving the least emphasis.

When we come to compare student perceptions of the two programs we note that differences are less marked than they were with teachers, particularly in relative emphasis ($r = 0.50$), but also in level of emphasis ($D = 2.28$). The evidence of our analysis to date would suggest that this is more due to differences between teachers and students in our Type II case study program in their perceptions of the operative curriculum than

to differences between teachers and students in our Type I case study program, although as we shall see these latter differences have also contributed.

Differences between the two student profiles are most marked in the comparative emphasis given to grammar, spelling, intensive reading, reading comprehension, and small group discussion. There are also clear differences, although not quite so marked, in the comparative emphasis given to report writing, composition exercises, extensive reading, interest-based reading, and drama and role-play. The student comparison would suggest that a Type I style is most readily distinguished from a Type II style by its greater emphasis on the mechanics of language, intensive reading, and reading comprehension; and its lesser emphasis on report writing, extensive reading, interest-based reading, small group discussion, and drama and role-play.

While there are clear areas of agreement in the two sets of perceptions, there are also some important areas of apparent disagreement. There is clear evidence from both teacher and student perceptions that a Type I style places greater emphasis on the mechanics of language, intensive reading, and reading comprehension; and that a Type II style places greater emphasis on small group discussion and drama and role-play. There are two further items in which perceptions of a greater emphasis on interest-based reading and remedial reading in the Type II program are supported by both sets of data, but not to the same degree. On five items - report writing, formal essay writing, personal writing, extensive reading, and public speaking - teacher and student perceptions are in conflict.

The disagreement on two of these items - extensive reading and public speaking - seems mainly to revolve around differences in the perceptions of teachers and students in our Type I case study program. There is reasonable agreement between Type II teachers and students that extensive reading receives some emphasis in the Type II operative curriculum in English language. A similar perception on the part of Type I teachers, however, is not supported by Type I students, who see extensive reading as having little or no emphasis in the Type I program. On balance then, it would seem reasonable to conclude that extensive reading receives some emphasis in the Type II program, but perceptions of a similar emphasis in the Type I program are rather more open to question.

Similarly, while there are differences between teachers and students on the level of emphasis on public speaking in the Type II case study program, they are agreed that it does not play a very important part in the overall English language curriculum. Teacher perceptions of some emphasis on public speaking in the Type I program, on the other hand, are not suported in the perceptions of students; so that, on balance, it would seem reasonable to conclude that public speaking receives little emphasis in the Type II program, and that perceptions of its emphasis in the Type I program are open to some doubt.

The remaining three problem items, on the other hand, all revolve around differences between teachers and students in their perceptions of curriculum emphases in the writing program in our Type II case study school. There is reasonable agreement between teachers and students that formal essay writing receives the major emphasis in our Type I program, and that personal writing and report writing receive somewhat less emphasis. The problem lies with teacher perceptions of a major emphasis in the Type II program on personal writing, with only minor emphasis on report writing and formal essay writing, which conflicts with student perceptions of a major emphasis on formal essay writing and report writing, with only a minor emphasis on personal writing, in the same program.

Luckily there is evidence in the documetary and interview data to suggest at least a partial explanation, and it revolves around the role played in the curriculum by the common elements of journal writing and prepared assignments. While journal writing is seen as a key element in the program by teachers and is no doubt central to their perception of a major emphasis on personal writing, it is clear from the class interviews that for many students it is not seen as important because it is not assessed. Similarly, the importance attached to the prepared assignments in student assessment may well account, at least in part, for the greater perceived emphasis on report writing and formal essay writing by students. Interestingly a similar discrepancy in teacher and student perceptions of the operative curriculum in Type II schools also occurred in the earlier study on social education. The data from that study also suggested that some of the discrepancy appeared to be assessment related, and that teachers experienced some difficulty in distinguishing between process and content, particularly in their assessment procedures (Piper, 1979:68-69). There is, however, clear evidence in both teacher and student interview data, and in classroom observation of lessons by the researcher, of the important role played by journal writing in the program in practice, despite its lack of any direct role in student assessment; and while it may be true that teachers have underestimated the importance attached to formal essay writing and report writing in their actual program in practice by virtue of a mismatch between their assessment procedures and their intended program emphases, it seems even more clear that students have underestimated the emphasis on personal writing in the program by interpreting assessment priorities as program priorities. On balance then it seems reasonable to conclude that our Type I program places its major emphasis on formal essay writing, with somewhat less emphasis on personal writing; and that our Type II program places its major emphasis on personal writing, although teachers may well have underestimated the importance of assessment procedures in determining program emphases on formal essay writing and report writing.

Taking into account all of the available evidence, and insofar as our case study programs are in fact representative of the style types they have been chosen to

exemplify, it would seem that a Type I style is most readily distinguished from the other basic style types by its greater emphasis on formal essay writing, the mechanics of language, particularly grammar and composition exercises, intensive reading, and reading comprehension; and its comparative lack of emphasis on small group discussion and drama and role-play.

A Type II style appears to be most readily distinguished from the other basic style types by its greater emphasis on personal writing and its comparative lack of emphasis on the mechanics of language, particularly grammar and composition exercises. It is further distinguished from a Type I style by its greater emphasis on interest-based reading, small group discussion, and drama and role-play; and a somewhat reduced emphasis on intensive reading, reading comprehension, and public speaking.

A Type III style appears to be most readily distinguished from the other basic style types by its greater emphasis on report writing, editing, and oral language in general, particularly interviewing and language variety; and its comparative lack of emphasis on intensive reading. It is further distinguished from a Type I style by its greater emphasis on interest-based reading and remedial reading; and from a Type II style by its greater emphasis on formal essay writing and the mechanics of language.

Mixed Styles

It would seem from the evidence of the exploratory case studies that the most common style in current school practice in English language curriculum is the mixed style and, while this is more likely to occur when we take the whole school or program as the unit of analysis, it is not uncommon to find it occurring within the programs of individual teachers. While this is no doubt partly attributable to the uncertainties and tensions alluded to earlier in this report, it also seems partly to result from the common habit among English teachers of using a wide variety of source books and materials. While the underlying philosophies of some of these books would seem to be so divergent as to make their use within the same program highly unlikely, there do seem to be a good number of English teachers whose confusion or eclecticism makes it possible for them to take what they want from a wide variety of apparently incompatible sources and weld these diverse elements into a coherent program.

The most common form of mixed style encountered in the study is the mixture of content and process emphases, or Type I/II classification, although it is not uncommon to find Type II/III mixed styles, and occasionally mixtures of all three style types, especially where the total school program is the unit of analysis.

In addition to classifying mixed styles on the basis of their component styles, the earlier social education study also identified four substyles based on the apparent reasons for the lack of a clear focus in the curriculum. In the first two of these substyles -

designated *pluralist* and *transitional* respectively - the mixture of style is largely inadvertent, unplanned, and essentially unstable. These are the types of mixed styles most frequently encountered in the present study, especially where the total school program in English language is the unit of classification.

A pluralist substyle is largely a *laissez-faire* mixture resulting from the delegation of authority for the curriculum to individual departments or teachers, with little or no overall co-ordination of programs. It is particularly likely to occur in schools where there is a substantial turnover of staff, and the ingredients of the mixture are likely to change from year to year with changes of staff. A transitional substyle is likely to occur when a school is moving from an established pattern towards a genuinely school-based curriculum, or when a school is endeavouring to implement a new approach enshrined in official curriculum documents but somewhat out of step with the conventional widsom of the practising teacher. Experimental programs, or elements of programs, are likely to be running alongside or as a component of established programs, and there is often an element of confusion and uncertainty, sometimes exacerbated by external constraints and internal resistance.

The other two substyles - designated *eclectic* and *syncretist* respectively - involve a mixture of styles which is deliberate and planned for, and likely to be relatively stable. They are less frequently encountered in the present study, but do occur, particularly in the programs of individual teachers. An eclectic substyle involves a conscious and planned mixture of styles which recognizes individual differences and preferences, and sets out to offer alternative choices. A syncretist substyle also involves a conscious and planned mixture of styles, but it seeks to bring together and synthesize the best elements from a number of styles. The eclectic substyle offers choice from a range of alternatives; the syncretist substyle seeks to rationalize and synthesize the available alternatives.

Specific Style Types

It will be recalled from our discussion in the previous chapter that the typology of curriculum style as it was developed from the investigation of current practices in social education identified within each of the basic styles three specific style types: a Type a style with its focus on the discipline or subject; a Type b style with its focus on the society or the environment; and a Type c style with its focus on the individual learner or group of learners. While it has not proved possible to investigate the applicability of this aspect of the typology in the detailed way in which we have investigated the basic styles, it is nevertheless clear from the investigation of language programs in the case study schools that within-style differences do occur, and there is evidence to suggest that the extended typology provides a useful way of classifying them. For example it is clear

that 'subject English' provides the major derivational focus for many of the programs in our case study schools, and this is consistent with our specific style Type a. Similarly it is clear that some integrated humanities and general studies programs, where language learning is closely connected with the social studies, provide a derivational focus which is consistent with our specific style Type b; and a number of English as a Second Language (ESL) and remedial programs in the case study schools would appear to be consistent with specific style Type c.

Thus for example the language program chosen to exemplify a Type I, or content-focused, style in our discussion of the basic style types (Case Study School 1) is also focused on subject English, and draws its justification and substance from the body of knowledge traditionally associated with the subject or discipline. It can therefore be more specifically classified as exhibiting a Type I (a), or content (discipline)-focused, style. Other programs in the case study schools, however, while sharing the content focus which identifies a Type I style, are not so clearly focused on subject English. Thus the program in remedial reading in another of our case study schools relies heavily on the use of programmed learning materials which have a clear focus on content, but takes its justification and substance from the identified needs of a particular group of students, and is therefore more appropriately classified as exhibiting a Type I (c), or content (student)-focused, style. A Type I (b), or content (society)-focused, style would appear to be rather more rare, but one of our case study schools has a course in Business English within the Commerce Department, and another has a typing course with a substantial language component, both of which would appear to fit reasonably comfortably within such a classification.

Similarly the language program chosen to exemplify a Type II, or process-focused, style in our discussion of the basic style types (Case Study School 2) has its derivational focus also in subject English, and can therefore be more specifically classified as exhibiting a Type II (a), or process (discipline)-focused, style. On the other hand, a number of humanities and general studies programs in the case study schools, while sharing this focus on process, closely integrate language development with social studies and are therefore more appropriately classified as exhibiting a Type II (b), or process (society)-focused, style, as is indicated by the following paragraph from one such program's statement of aims:

> To this end the Humanities department aims to provide students with as many opportunities as possible for them to participate in all modes of language behaviour in a wide range of language situations, emphasizing the development of social education skills which enable the students to develop as independent learners and decision makers in society.

A number of English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and remedial programs in the case study schools, where students are withdrawn from normal classes for special

language development programs, seem equally consistent with a Type II (c), or process (student)-focused, classification.

As we have seen from our earlier discussion, Type III styles appear to be rare in current practice, so that it is more difficult to determine the appropriateness of the specific style types as a device for classifying within-style differences for context-focused approaches. The CDC/ACT Language Development Project, chosen to exemplify a Type III, or context-focused, style in our discussion of basic style types, also has a strong focus on social interaction and would therefore appear to be most appropriately classified as a Type III (b), or context (society)-focused style. Two of the schools in our case study sample run English as a Second Language programs in which the ESL teacher gives no formal lessons as such, but works with the students in their normal classrooms in all subject areas providing advice, assistance, and cultural mediation as it is required, as well as providing a place where second language learners can come before or after school or during lunch hours for general support or help with specific problems. Such programs would appear to be appropriately classified as Type III (c), or context (student)-focused. There are no programs in our case study schools which currently fit neatly into a Type III (a), or context (discipline)-focused, style, but it is possible to conceive of a 'language in the context of literature' approach, which forms an element in the mixed style of two of our case study school programs, as providing the basis for such a classification. Perhaps too a fully developed 'language across the curriculum' program might warrant a Type III (a), or context (discipline)-focused, classification.

It would seem then that the typology, both in its basic and extended form, is a useful device for classifying school programs in English language that is consistent with current practice in the junior secondary school and relevant both to the theoretical issues underlying language learning and the conflicting pressures impinging on the school program from outside. It should therefore prove useful not only to researchers and curriculum developers, but also to schools anxious to rethink the bases of their English language programs and the directions they would wish them to take.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

One result of the move away from centrally prescribed curricula has been the difficulty in obtaining reliable information on current practices in Australian schools. There is therefore a need for research studies designed to map current practice and to place it in the context of curriculum change. The present study set out to provide such a map of current practice in English language curriculum in the junior secondary school.

The investigation was carried out in two stages. The first stage involved exploratory case studies of the English language programs in 25 schools in New South Wales, Victoria, and the Australian Capital Territory selected to provide as wide a range of approaches to the curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school as possible. The second stage involved a more detailed follow-up investigation of English language programs in eight of those schools identified as being representative of the broad range of approaches encountered in the initial exploratory stage. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in gathering data on three aspects of the curriculum - the ideal curriculum, or what ought to be taught; the planned curriculum, or what it is intended to teach; and the operative curriculum, or what is actually perceived to be taught in practice - from the perspectives of both teachers and students, as mediated and interpreted by the outside observer (the researcher).

Any attempt to understand current practice in English language curriculum must be viewed in the context of the rapidly changing ideas about language and language learning which have revolutionized English language curriculum documents over the past decade. Far from providing a brave new world in the English language classroom, however, the bewildering array of new ideas, coupled with increasing community pressures for accountability, have produced a growing uncertainty and confusion among English language teachers concerning both their role and their effectiveness which provides a persistent underlying theme to the study of current practice.

While there is some disagreement between teachers and students in their perceptions of the ideal curriculum in English language, there is much closer agreement in their perceptions of the operative curriculum, and this general concurrence of perceptions gives us some confidence that the picture of current practice emerging from the data is a reasonably accurate one, at least insofar as our case study schools are concerned. Teachers and students are generally in agreement on the major emphasis given to narrative writing, composition exercises, intensive reading (that is, the detailed study of set books), and reading comprehension in the operative curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school, and the relative lack of emphasis on oral language, particularly interviewing and language variety. The greatest discrepancies

occur in personal writing, which students see as somewhat less emphasized, and formal essay writing and grammar, which students see as somewhat more emphasized, than their teachers do. Teachers on the whole see the operative curriculum in English language in the junior secondary school as coming closer to meeting their goals and expectations than students do, and as embodying fairly faithfully the intended emphases of their planned curriculum.

Among the more qualitative features of current practices in English language curriculum in the junior secondary school revealed by the study are: the boring nature for both students and teachers of much of the work done in the English language classroom; the generally uninspired and uninspiring nature of much school writing; the dominant role of commercial textbooks in determining much of what is done in the English language classroom; the downward pressure of public examinations or requirements at the Year 12 level on the curriculum in the junior secondary school; the general lack of any reference point in current linguistic theory and research as a basis for practice; a concern with the mechanics of language which seems to be largely unrelated to the editing process; an almost exclusive emphasis on structural elements in learning about language; and a general neglect of oral language development. It would appear that, contrary to popular belief, traditional methods and emphases continue to dominate in the English language curriculum in the junior secondary school; although it is also true that this generalized picture obscures a good deal of variation in practice, both between schools and between individual classrooms within schools.

In exploring this variation an important aim of the study has been to investigate the applicability to the curriculum in English language of a typology of curriculum style developed during an earlier investigation into current practices in social education in Australian schools (Piper, 1979). That study identified three basic styles evident in current approaches to the curriculum in social education in Australian schools: a Type I style, with its focus on *content*; a Type II style, with its focus on *process*; and a Type III style, with its focus on the *context* in which the learning takes place.

The present study generally confirmed the existence of Type I and Type II styles in the practices of the case study schools, and found evidence of a Type III style in one of the projects operating within the Curriculum Development Centre's Language Development Project; although the commonest style type encountered in the study was a mixed style, most frequently a mixture of Type I and II styles.

The evidence of the case study programs suggests that a Type I, or content-focused, style is most readily distinguished from the other basic style types by its greater emphasis on formal essay writing, the mechanics of language, especially grammar and composition exercises, intensive reading, and reading comprehension; and its relative lack of emphasis on small group discussion and drama and role-play.

A Type II, or process-focused, style appears to be most readily distinguished from

Table 7.1 Summary of Specific Style Types and Typical Program Emphases

TYPE	a (focus on the discipline/ subject area)	b (focus on the society/ environment)	c (focus on the individual learner/group of learners)
I (focus on content)	. traditional programs in 'subject English' - emphasis on structure	. vocationally-oriented language courses e.g. Business English	. programmed instruction - emphasis on language acquisition
II (focus on process)	. 'growth model' programs in 'subject English' - emphasis on 'the four language skills'	. integrated humanities and general studies programs - language as part of social development	. withdrawal programs in ESL - emphasis on role of language in learning
III (focus on context)	. language in the context of literature? . language across the curriculum?	. programs focusing on register, language variety, language functions - emphasis on language in a social context	. non-withdrawal programs in ESL - emphasis on language in the classroom context/language in the cultural context

the other basic style types by its greater emphasis on personal writing and its comparative lack of emphasis on the mechanics of language, particularly grammar and composition exercises. It is further distinguished from a Type I style by its greater emphasis on interest-based reading, small group discussion, and drama and role-play; and a somewhat reduced emphasis on intensive reading, reading comprehension, and public speaking.

A Type III, or context-focused, style appears to be most readily distinguished from the other basic style types by its greater emphasis on report writing, editing, and oral language in general, particularly interviewing and language variety; and its comparative lack of emphasis on intensive reading. It is further distinguished from a Type I style by its greater emphasis on interest-based and remedial reading; and from a Type II style by its greater emphasis on formal essay writing and the mechanics of language, although these are not emphasized to the extent they are in the Type I, or content-focused, style.

The earlier social education study also identified three specific style types occurring within each of the basic styles: a Type a style, with its focus on the discipline or subject area; a Type b style, with its focus on the society or the environment; and a Type c style, with its focus on the individual learner or group of learners. While this extension of the typology was not investigated as thoroughly as the basic style types, there is evidence to suggest that within-style differences do occur in English language programs, and that the extended typology provides a useful way of classifying them. For example, it is clear that 'subject English' provides a major derivational focus for many of the programs in the case study schools, and this is consistent with specific style Type a. Similarly it is clear that some integrated humanities and general studies programs, where language learning is closely connected with social education, provide a derivational focus which is consistent with our specific style Type b; and a number of English as a Second Language (ESL) and remedial programs in the case study schools would appear to be consistent with specific style Type c.

Table 7.1 provides a summary of the nine specific style types of the extended typology, together with some typical program emphases as they have occurred in our case study schools and the CDC/ACT Language Development Project. Because of the relative rarity of Type III styles in the case study schools, the Type III (a) programs listed in the table are hypothetical, based on elements in the mixed styles of two of our case study schools.

While the study has been princially a mapping exercise, it does have some important implications for research and development, for school practice and teacher education, and for policy. In considering these implications, the first question that arises is the extent to which the findings of the study are applicable beyond the immediate sample of case study schools. The study itself of course cannot provide the answer to such a question; nor was it designed to do so. In investigating current practices in

English language curriculum in the junior secondary school it has sought to provide not so much generalizations as a series of working hypotheses which are consistent with a substantial body of field observation but require further testing and replication in a variety of situations if their wider applicability is to be demonstrated. These working hypotheses can be summarized as:

1 that style types similar to those identified by the study will be found in the English language programs of other schools and other school systems;
2 that the characteristics of these style types will be similar to those revealed by the present study; and
3 that these differences in style type will have implications for the English language education that students receive similar to those evident in the case study schools.

Implications for Research and Development

The implications of the study for research and development are principally the demonstration of need, and the application of the concept of curriculum style to an area of the curriculum other than social education. The uncertainties and confused directions of English language curriculum in the junior secondary school which have been underlined by the study identify it as a priority area for curriculum research and development, particularly given its central importance both to learning and to living. Of particular importance here are the detailed analysis of the implications of modern linguistic research for classroom practice; the investigation of means whereby these insights can be incorporated into classroom practice; and the development of curriculum frameworks and supporting materials which make use of these insights in facilitating improved language learning in Australian classrooms.

The demonstration of the applicability of the concept of curriculum style and the typology derived from it to an area of the curriculum other than that in which it was developed is important in that it extends the boundaries of the concept and its potential usefulness as a device for classifying the wider curriculum in Australian schools. The extension of the concept to the English language area has, moreover, forced some rethinking of the concept itself, and of its relationship to the more theoretical issues which underpin practice and the unconscious epistemological and ideological assumptions which determine much of what teachers actually do in the classroom. It seems reasonable to assume that its extension to other areas of the curriculum would require a similar rethinking of the bases of the concept; so that its status must still be that of a working hypothesis tested in practice in two broad areas of the junior secondary school curriculum but still in need of further testing and development.

Classifications are more or less useful as practical devices for ordering the complex events of reality so that they can be more effectively investigated and

understood, rather than as the embodiment of any 'natural' order. Ultimately, of course, style is idiosyncratic; and while the typology goes some way towards providing a conceptual framework within which these idiosyncracies can be grouped and ordered, there are many possible dimensions of difference which it does not account for. Clearly there will be occasions on which it is preferable to discuss style on an idiosyncratic basis, as is frequently the case in literary and art criticism. There will also be occasions when neither the typology nor the idiosyncratic approach will be quite adequate to the task, and there will be a need to go beyond the categories provided by the typology to analyse programs in terms of some other dimension of difference more appropriate to the particular purpose. Hopefully there will also be occasions when the typology provides a useful analytic tool, not only for researchers and developers, but also for schools anxious to rethink the bases of their English language programs and the directions they would like them to take.

The study also raises some important questions for curriculum research, in particular the nature of the variables to be investigated in mapping curriculum change. If differences in style type are as important as they would appear to be, the essence of curriculum change may reside less in changes in curriculum content than in changes in focus; less in what is taught than in how it is taught, and how it is learned. Thus studies of curriculum change which have looked principally at changes in topic areas may be missing the directions of significant change, or imputing change where little real change has taken place. Such studies may also be missing the subtle shifts of emphasis brought about by the use of particular textbooks or materials, or by the adoption of particular assessment procedures. Whether instruments such as those used in the present study could be refined to a point where the large scale mapping of curriculum change could accurately reflect these subtleties is a moot point; but they do provide a starting point for tackling the problem.

Implications for Practice

Increasingly Australian education is moving away from the rigidly centralized control of the school curriculum which once characterized it; and increasingly decisions relating to the curriculum are made at the school level. All too frequently however schools have failed to grasp the opportunity offered to them to develop a curriculum which is genuinely school-based, as distinct from teacher-based or subject department-based; and many of those who have tried have found that they lacked the resources to carry the task through to a satisfying conclusion. While it is only a modest contribution to the massive task of curriculum renewal, the concept of curriculum style and the typology developed from it could provide a focal point around which schools could organize their thinking and their planning, at least in the areas of social education and English language.

Perhaps more importantly, by enabling schools to examine their own practice in relation to the range of styles identified by the study, the typology offers a framework within which curriculum decisions can be more clearly conceptualized and more consistently viewed in terms of their theoretical implications.

The relationship between theory and practice has always been a tenuous one in education. The evidence of the study suggests that it is the practical pedagogy of the classroom rather than theoretical considerations, either linguistic or pedagogical, that determines curriculum emphases in English language. Of particular interest in this regard is the role played by assessment procedures in determining, and sometimes distorting, curriculum emphases in the English language curriculum in the junior secondary school. One aspect of this already noted is the downward pressure of public examinations at the Year 12 level on the curriculum in the junior secondary school. This of course is a problem not exclusively related to the curriculum in English language. As Jean Blackburn has observed more generally of the curriculum in the junior secondary school:

> Once primary schooling was all that most people got. We have extended compulsion into the secondary phase, for most students into the tenth year of schooling, without fundamentally changing the orientation of the compulsory secondary years to accommodate this fact. This orientation has two aspects. The first is that ability of an academic kind displayed in bookish ways remains the only seriously valued kind of ability. The second is that the early secondary phase continues to be viewed as part of the selective process for higher academic studies. (Blackburn, 1981:88)*

Another, and perhaps more insidious, aspect is the role played by assessment procedures in determining student perceptions of curriculum emphases which, as we have seen in our Type II case study program, may not be the intended or even the actual emphases of the program-in-practice. Since it is the surface features of language that are most easily measured it is not surprising that these are the features most frequently assessed, especially where school or system requirements encourage this form of assessment, and therefore the features perceived by students - and sometimes teachers - as the most important. If these procedures broadly mirror program emphases, no great harm is done. If, on the other hand, they distort program emphases - a frequent complaint by teachers in the case study schools - then it becomes a case of the tail wagging the dog. It seems at least possible that in such cases a clearer articulation of the theoretical underpinnings of the program would make it easier to develop assessment procedures more in line with program priorities and to argue their justification. A starting point for such reappraisal could be an analysis of curriculum style, since it is a reasonable assumption that differences in curriculum style imply differences in

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* For a further analysis of this issue see also Collins and Hughes, 1982.

evaluation style, and hence in assessment procedures, if only because they focus on different learning outcomes.

Perhaps the most important implication of the study for practice, however, is the evidence it provides of the conflicting pressures on the English language curriculum in the junior secondary school: a theme with which we began this report, and which the evidence of the study has orchestrated. While it may not be possible to resolve these conflicting pressures, it is possible to choose among them, and to throw the weight of the school behind a co-ordinated approach to them: and this leads us on to a consideration of the policy implications of the study.

Implications for Policy

Few schools, it seems, have a co-ordinated language policy, particularly one which recognizes the role of language in learning in all subject areas. While such ideas have had widespread currency in the educational debate in Australia for more than a decade now, they appear to have made little penetration of school practice. The Language Across the Curriculum program outlined in Chapter 5 is exceptional among the case study schools; and it, by its own assessment, has had only limited success to date.

This in turn has implications for policy at the system level. The ideas that have revolutionized English language curriculum documents over the last decade (see Chapter 1) do not appear to have sparked a similar revolution in school practice. The problem would seem to lie less with the ideas themselves - although these do sometimes meet with considerable resistance from classroom teachers, as we have seen in our sample interview in Chapter 2 - than with their implications and applications in the classroom. We are reminded of Christie and Rothery's conclusion from their survey of English language curriculum documents 'that teachers had insufficient understanding of the theoretical and research foundations of the syllabuses, and so had great difficulty in interpreting them and acting on them' (Christie and Rothery, 1979:206). This has implications not only for the documents themselves and the way in which they are prepared, presented, and disseminated, but also for teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, and the nature and extent of the support services likely to be required if system goals are to be reflected in changed practices in the schools. It seems unrealistic to expect that schools can achieve the task of curriculum renewal in the English language area without a good deal more support than they are receiving at the moment.

This in turn has implications for policy at the national level. It is ironical that at a time when initiatives are being taken towards the development of a national language policy (Australia, 1982), a major national initiative in curriculum development in the English language area is being abandoned with the winding down of the Curriculum Development Centre's Language Development Project. While the scope of a national

language policy would need to be much wider than English language, and much wider than schooling, it is clear that English language, by virtue of its undisputed dominance in the economic, social and educational life of the community, must provide the cornerstone for any such policy; and that any attempt to implement such a policy must come to terms with the school curriculum, and current practices in English language teaching, both as mother tongue and second language, in Australian schools. If the policy is to be more than a catalogue of pious intentions it will need to face up to the magnitude of the task of implementation underlined by the evidence of the study, and the dubious wisdom of abandoning a functional and operational curriculum development project which could help serve those ends.

General Conclusion

In seeking for patterns of meaning in the curriculum in English language the study has deliberately stopped short of evaluative judgment. Its intention has not been to demonstrate that one style is superior to another, but that styles are different, and will have different consequences for the kind of learning that students receive. There are of course implications in the data of the study for evaluative judgment, but it is for the practitioner to determine their relevance for his or her own practice.

Style is a way of viewing the world as much as it is a mode of behaviour. If we view learning principally as a cumulative process, quantitatively built up by the acquisition of more and more bits of knowledge, we are likely to adopt a content-oriented view of the curriculum and to develop a Type I style. If on the other hand we view learning principally as an organic process, qualitatively developed through doing and growing, we are likely to adopt a process-oriented view of the curriculum and to develop a Type II style. If again we view learning principally as an adaptive process, experientially learned in response to changing situations and circumstances, we are likely to adopt a context-oriented view of the curriculum and to develop a Type III style. And if we have an eclectic view of learning, or are ambivalent in our views, we are likely to adopt a less uniform view of the curriculum and to develop a mixed style.

The aim is not to reduce curriculum to a single preferred style, but to enable the practitioner to improve the quality of his or her own preferred style by developing a deeper understanding of it, and of its relationship to other styles; and that is the point at which critical self-evaluation and genuine curriculum renewal become possible.

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APPENDIX I

The Instruments Used in the Study:

1 The Teacher Questionnare

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

LANGUAGE LEARNING PROJECT

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions for Completing the Questionnaire

Information given in response to this questionnaire will be used solely for reporting on current practices in English language teaching in Australian schools, and will be treated with absolute confidentiality. In reporting the findings of the study, no individual or school will be identified by name.

The questionnaire is concerned with the relative emphasis given in your English language programs to a number of broad aspects of English language learning. For each broad aspect, please CIRCLE the number 1, 2, or 3 according to whether the particular aspect:

1 receives A LOT OF EMPHASIS in your English language program;
2 receives SOME EMPHASIS in your English language program, but not a lot;
3 receives LITTLE OR NO EMPHASIS in your English language program.

The questionnaire also recognizes a potential conflict between the teacher's own estimate of the emphasis which should be given to a particular aspect; the emphasis it is given in the planned program; and the emphasis it actually receives in the classroom.

We have therefore provided for answers to be given in three columns labelled Ideal Program, Program as Planned, and Program in Practice, should you wish to make these distinctions in your responses.

By Ideal Program we are not seeking to invite fanciful or utopian responses, but to allow you to record the emphasis you would give each of these aspects if you had the freedom and the opportunity to teach the sort of program you believe is required.

By providing a distinction between Program as Planned and Program in Practice we are recognizing that, for many teachers, there is often a gap between what is planned and what actually happens in the classroom, and providing the opportunity for you to record such a distinction if you perceive it in your own practice.

However, the provision of the three columns is intended to facilitate your responses, not to complicate them, and if for any or all of these

aspects you do not perceive these distinctions to exist, please fill in your responses in the first column only and ignore the second and third column. Similarly, if you perceive a distinction between your ideal and your planned program, but not between your planned program and your program in practice, then fill in the first two columns only and ignore the third column.

You are reminded that the investigation is confined to upper primary and lower secondary schooling (Years 5-10) and is a study of actual practices in English language teaching. We would therefore ask that you respond on the basis of the actual program(s) you are teaching, whether or not you are responsible for the nature of the program and whether or not you are in sympathy with its emphases.

Where there is a conflict in your responses arising from the fact that you are teaching more than one program, or at more than one year level, please answer in relation to the program/year level in which you currently spend most teaching time.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CO-OPERATION

PLEASE COMPLETE

Primary/Secondary .....

Year Level(s) taught .....

Subject(s) taught:

English/Language Arts	☐	Other (please specify)	☐
English as a Second Language	☐	.....	
Initial Migrant English	☐	.....	
Remedial	☐	.....	

1 A LOT OF EMPHASIS

2 SOME EMPHASIS

3 LITTLE OR NO EMPHASIS

	Ideal Program	Program as Planned	Program in Practice
A WRITING			
1 Narrative writing	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
2 Report writing	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
3 Formal essay writing	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
4 Personal writing	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
5 Editing	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
B MECHANICS			
1 Grammar eg. parts of speech, phrases, clauses, subject and predicate etc.	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
2 Spelling eg. rules, lists, spelling games, etc.	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
3 Composition exercises eg. sentence correction, paragraphing, punctuation etc.	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
C READING			
1 Intensive reading eg. set books	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
2 Extensive reading eg. wide reading schemes	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
3 Interest-based reading	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
4 Remedial reading	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
5 Reading comprehension i.e. comprehension exercises on written material	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3

PLEASE TURN OVER

1 A LOT OF EMPHASIS

2 SOME EMPHASIS

3 LITTLE OR NO EMPHASIS

		Ideal Program	Program as Planned	Program in Practice
D	TALKING AND LISTENING			
1	Small group discussion	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
2	Drama/role-play	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
3	Public speaking eg. debates, prepared talks etc.	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
4	Interviewing	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
5	Listening comprehension i.e. comprehension exercises on spoken material	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
6	Language variety eg. accent, dialect, register etc.	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3

PLEASE RETURN TO ME DURING THE NEXT TWO DAYS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CO-OPERATION

Kevin Piper
Senior Research Officer
Learning and Teaching Division

APPENDIX II

The Instruments Used in the Study:

2 The Student Q-Sort Cards

The student Q-sort cards were designed to parallel the items on the teacher questionnaire, and consisted of 19 cards with the items worded as follows:

A1 WRITING STORIES

A2 WRITING REPORTS

A3 WRITING ESSAYS

A4 WRITING ABOUT YOUR OWN THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

B1 GRAMMAR

e.g. . parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.)
. phrases and clauses
. subject and predicate etc.

B2 SPELLING

e.g. . spelling lists
. spelling rules
. spelling games, etc.

B3 COMPOSITION EXERCISES

e.g. . sentence correction
. paragraphing
. punctuation, etc.

C1 STUDYING A SET BOOK
(everybody in the class studies the same book)

C2 READING A LOT OF BOOKS
e.g. . books borrowed from the library

C3 READING BOOKS WHICH INTEREST YOU AND WHICH YOU CHOOSE FOR YOURSELF

C4 GETTING HELP WITH DIFFICULTIES YOU OR YOUR CLASSMATES HAVE WITH READING

C5 READING COMPREHENSION
(answering questions on a passage you have been asked to read)

D1 DISCUSSING IN SMALL GROUPS

D2 ACTING

e.g. . class plays
. role play, etc.

D3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

e.g. . debating
. prepared talks, etc.

D4 INTERVIEWING

D5 LISTENING COMPREHENSION

(answering questions on something you have been asked to listen to)

D6 LANGUAGE VARIETY

e.g. . different accents
. different dialects
. different ways of talking in different situations